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Catholic Sermons.

SELECT DISCOURSES
BY EMINENT MINISTERS
OF VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS



CATHOLIC SERMONS.

LONDON

J. ROBINSON AND CO., PRINTERS, COWCROSS STREET.

CATHOLIC SERMONS.

Select Discourses by Eminent Ministers
of various Denominations.

VOLUME I.



London:
F. E. LONGLEY, 29, FARRINGDON STREET,

1874.

100. w. 380.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE publisher asks me to introduce this volume, and I comply with his request all the more readily that it needs no introduction. The eminent preachers whose names adorn its pages, have long ago established themselves in the confidence and honor of all Protestant Churches, and to-day their influence in the pulpit is greater than at any former period of their respective ministries. The publisher's idea of bringing together such a body of varied, yet coherent testimony, borne in the name of Christ, is singularly felicitous and useful.

Men dwarf themselves by living wholly in any one denomination; by so doing they set up inadequate standards, and come to very incomplete conclusions: anything, therefore, that can enlarge the knowledge and the sympathies of Christian professors is to be most warmly commended. He would be a very acute man, who, not knowing the names of the preachers, could tell to which denomination any one of the following Sermons is to be ascribed.

Denominationalism may serve many good uses, but I am not aware that it ever did much good in the pulpit. That ministry will, in my opinion, be the most truly and permanently successful, which concerns itself with eternal truths rather than with their temporary aspects and adaptations. May I further express the opinion that the English pulpit was never more

spiritually vigorous and honestly charitable than it is to-day? The following sermons strongly confirm this view of the situation, and for this reason I am glad to have the honour of being invited to identify my name with so conspicuous and influential a band of Christian preachers.

It will be a bright day for the Holy Catholic Church when such men can be brought together in prolonged and devout council upon the present condition of the Christian ministry, and the best methods of increasing its efficiency. The press is said to be running the pulpit a very hard race : if it be really so, I am glad of it, because every healthful institution is improved by honest and determined rivalry. As ministers representing all denominations, let us meet to take advice, and speak our minds, upon many important questions relating to the position and prospects of the pulpit. We shall do each other good. Old hopes will be quickened, and the best memories will be touched ; and who knows whether we might not all take a new start in this infinitely precious work of declaring the Son of God to mankind? May this suggestion lay hold of some wise and energetic mind !

JOSEPH PARKER.

Highbury, 1873.

NAPOLEON III.

A SERMON,

BY THE REV. NEWMAN HALL, LL.B.

Preached at the Dutch Church, Austin Friars, January 21, 1873.

“Their works do follow them.”—Revelations xiv. 13.

THIS is true of all men. Of “the blessed who die in the Lord ;” of the reprobate who die in sin ; of the “righteous who hath hope in his death,” and of the “wicked who is driven away in his wickedness.” Of all moral agents it is true—“Their works do follow them.”

Nothing done is done with. The letter written, remains ; the inscription endures with the stone on which it was carved. It may be on a rough rock in some remote wilderness, where foot of traveller rarely treads, and where eye of beholder may never read the writing. But, seen or unseen, it is there. It may be on some well-shaped stone of honour over the portals of some palace, and mighty princes may often read it, and the shout of countless crowds may proclaim it ; or that palace may be overthrown, and that stone, once in the high place of honour, may be defiled with filth, overgrown with weeds, or covered up with sand. Yet, in dishonour as in glory, that inscription is there, unchanged. Centuries may pass, during which it may be buried out of sight ; yet it still keeps its testimony, and in after ages the explorer may exhume it ; and though the language may have been lost, the antiquarian may decipher it, and the inscription be read off the same as when the workman laid down his graving tool. Through all changes, and at whatever distance of time, his works follow him.

And yet a carving on stone may perish. It may be deliberately cut away. Other writing may be substituted.

The stone itself may crumble. It is otherwise with moral actions. Their nature cannot be changed. The characters in which they are graven cannot be effaced. The book in which they are written, more lasting than any rock, cannot perish. Men die, not their deeds. Men change, but the actions already performed retain their features. The opinions of the world may vary ; what was basely flattered when the doer stood erect may be basely blamed when he falls ; or, what was bravely censured when he was prosperous, may be generously excused when adversity overtakes him ; or the condemnation loudly uttered while he lived and could defend himself, may be charitably hushed when his lips are closed in death ; but the works themselves retain their indelible character, and whether the workers were rich or poor, whether in lofty stations or in low, their works do follow them. The consequences of the works may vary at different times, and may vary from the purpose with which those works were done ; but the moral character, arising from the motive of those works, is permanent. No lapse of time, no change of dynasty, no altered fashion of public opinion, can affect them. Men may work, and mount the highest summits of worldly grandeur ; or work, and be overwhelmed with disaster ; they may work, and the world ring with their praises ; or work, and receive universal execration ; they may die in honour, and be entombed in the sepulchres of the kings, or may die in disgrace, and be buried like a dog ; but, unaffected and unchanged, " Their works do follow them."

The actors have passed along the highway of life and entered the dark portal of the unseen world ; but lo, in long procession, their works do follow them ! Barriers may have been skilfully constructed across the route so as to cut off the past, but it is all in vain ; those works that follow press along in unbroken column, and cross every ditch, and climb every rampart, and follow ! And crowds of partisans may stand in the way and seek to keep back the witnesses, or alter their testimony. In vain ! They refuse to be hindered. Deterred by no frowns, lured by no smiles, bought by no bribes, they steadily follow ! History may defend, eloquence praise, poetry enwreath, the multitude applaud ; but those works follow, not more rapidly or with brightened aspect because of such

commendation. Or history may condemn, eloquence censure, poetry stigmatise, the multitude execrate; but those works follow, not with slackened speed or countenance more clouded than before. Whether men erect monuments to the workers, or cast down their statues and erase their names, still those works do follow to a tribunal where every mask is torn off, every motive weighed, the secrets of all hearts revealed, and righteous judgment given.

There has just departed from amongst us the most remarkable man of the present age. Whether for good or for evil, Louis Napoleon did for many years occupy the most prominent position among the nations of the world. From the seclusion of a prison, from the obscurity of an exile, he leaped into the Presidential chair, and then, at one blow, striking down all opponents by the power of a magic name, winning the overwhelming suffrages of the people of a great nation, he occupied for many years an Emperor's throne. His palace was the abode of a luxury and splendour which competed with Oriental pageantry and ancient fable. Fashion from his saloons dictated laws to the civilized world. Ambassadors from all nations waited in suspense for those oracular words on which peace or war seemed to hang. It was he who boasted that without France—that is, without himself—not a cannon could be fired in Europe. He was regarded as the saviour of France from a reign of terror which no one else could have curbed; and to have restored liberty to Italy, which could not without him have cast off the oppressor's yoke. The mere supposition at one time that he secretly cherished hostile intentions towards Great Britain alarmed our statesmen, threw the people into a panic, and entailed millions of expenditure and an increased taxation, which is likely to continue for many years; while to his friendly feelings and his enlightened commercial views is attributed that freedom of trade and of intercourse which has tended so much to the wealth and friendliness of two nations which used to be regarded as natural foes. When he first seized Imperial power he was, to the world around, an object of suspicion and dread; when he had consolidated his throne, of homage and praise; when he declared war with Prussia, of wonder and suspense; when

defeated, of indignation and invective ; in captivity and exile, of considerate sympathy ; in death, of respectful regret ; but all through his career, and not less so at its close, " his works do follow him."

In many of our judgments we are properly influenced by the success or failure of the actions judged. Victory crowns with laurels the commander whom defeat would have disgraced. The wisdom or folly of a law may often be rightly measured by its results. Our indignation against the successful perpetrator of a crime is modified by compassion when we see him trembling in the hands of the hangman. We may speak plainly the censure we feel of a man living, over whose open grave we whisper words of hope ; but we must never forget that in morals, results do not affect the character of actions, and our varying feelings do not alter the real character of the agent.

There are great differences of opinion as regards the deceased. The crowds at his funeral of all ranks, who paid their tribute of esteem ; his relatives, his personal attendants, the companions of former years ; those who knew him well amid many changes, the poor as well as the rich, testified that Cæsar dead, as well as Cæsar living, had a home in many hearts. Others, also familiar with his actions, and further from the scenes of his death, are unable even at the present time to repress the utterance of contrary sentiments. Whether his long-cherished dream of re-establishing a Napoleonic Empire was evidence of heroic resolve and generous patriotism, or whether it was a mere selfish ambition, seeking to gratify itself at whatever cost to others ; whether he faithfully kept his oath to maintain the Republic which had elected him its guardian, or whether the exigencies of France justified the violation of it ; whether he instigated and approved those butcheries of the *coup d'état* by which he profited, or whether they resulted from circumstances he could not control ; whether those wholesale executions which immediately followed, and those transportations to deadly regions of so many statesmen and fellow-citizens whose only crime was opposition to his rule, were justified by reasons similar to those which the Government of France now existing might urge for the executions which followed the struggle with the Commune, or whether both were alike

to be condemned ; whether the tight curb with which he restrained all political thought and utterance was necessary for order, or whether by forbidding the people all exercise of freedom he sought to render them still more incapable of it ; whether, on the whole, his government of France, tried by its final results, was advantageous or disastrous ; whether or not he did all he could to verify his oft-repeated assurance that the Empire is peace ; whether his intervention in Italy was dictated by pure sympathy for the Italians, or whether his object was the extension of French territory and the strengthening of his own rule ; whether the tide of Italian freedom and unity swept farther than he ever intended or desired ; whether, as the ally of Great Britain, his conduct was regulated by a fidelity which no prospect of increased popularity could ever have shaken, and on which no treaties, avowed or hidden, have cast a shade ; whether the suspicions so long and deeply cherished towards him by our statesmen and people were reasonable or not ; whether the responsibility of the late war, by which hundreds of thousands of brave men have been killed or mutilated, and sorrow carried into countless homes, rests on him, or whether, against his will, he was driven to it by the clamour of the people who now repudiate it ; whether, if he did promote it, the necessity he might plead was the selfish necessity of maintaining his own dynasty, or a patriotic zeal for the honour and safety of France ; whether his own personal conduct and the character of his Court tended to sanction, or whether, on the contrary, it discouraged the licentiousness which is the true cause of the weakness of any nation,—all these are questions for history, or, if for the present time, not for us, while as yet the funeral wreaths are unfaded on the coffin which is deposited so near us.

It is a generous feeling that leads our press and public men to dwell for the present only on what may be said in his praise. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* We think of his personal affability, his grateful memory in prosperity of any personal service rendered him when in adversity, the strong attachment he won from his friends, the order and commercial prosperity of his rule, the beautifying of the French capital, the tribute which grateful Italy is now placing on his bier, the personal bravery which shrank not from death amid

the slaughter of Sedan, the quiet dignity with which he bore his amazing reverses.

If all that his worst enemies say of him is true, his great faults have had a great retribution. Deceived, defeated, captured, dethroned, exiled, the victim of a painful disease, Louis Napoleon, passing away from the midst of us, is, for the present, only an object of sympathy, and his death an occasion of regret.

This little island of ours, favoured shrine of liberty, which, during so many centuries, no invading army has defiled, but which has ever welcomed the fugitive escaping from persecution and oppression ; this, our honoured and beloved England, which in turn has given asylum to French kings, and to refugees from the threats both of monarchs and of republics, and where so many of the victims of the late Emperor's own rule found shelter, does not now tarnish her generous hospitality by any untimely criticisms uttered over the grave.

In his splendour he had been the guest of our Queen. In his decay he was the guest of the people. He did not abuse our hospitality by any unseemly parade, or by any plotting against the existing Government of our ally. Whatever his conduct at other times and in other places, his behaviour in these, his latter days, was without reproach. And who can tell what may have passed between himself and his Maker during these last months of retirement, when the symptoms of mortality were warning him to prepare for eternity ? He knew the truth, and was willing that others should know it. He readily gave permission for the erection of a preaching hall at the Paris Exhibition, and of a large Bible-stand, at the six porticoes of which the Scriptures, in six different languages, were freely distributed to visitors of different nations. When the Romanist priesthood expostulated, asking him to withdraw his permission, he said to them, " I permit you to do the same. Build *your* stand and distribute *your* version." A lady of the Society of Friends felt she had a special mission to him in reference to his own soul. The Emperor cheerfully arranged with the secretary of the Evangelical Alliance to see her. He listened thoughtfully to her faithful address, thanked her cordially, and said, " You would, perhaps, be surprised to know how very

nearly my own convictions are in harmony with all you have uttered." He knew the truth. Who would not hope that, during these last months, if not before, he may have embraced it, and found pardon from Him who delighteth in mercy, and rejoiced in the truth which was the hope of Saul of Tarsus : "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief"?

But such faith in Christ, and such salvation through Him, —of which all who truly repent may be assured—does not alter the moral character of their actions. It does alter their condition in the next world, but it does not change their faults into virtues. The absolution of the guilt of sin is not a transformation of the nature of sin. A lie is a lie, though the lie be pardoned. Murder is murder, though the murderer may repent, and be saved. And if repentance does not alter the character of the works that follow the doer, surely death does not.

Death makes us silent. We uncover in the presence of a Monarch mightier than all the kings of the earth. We are silent as we stand before One who has in turn subdued the greatest conquerors, and laid low the loftiest thrones. We are all reminded of our own mortality. We are all convinced of our own faults, and the account each one of us must shortly render.

But let no one mistake this silence. It is a generous nation showing respect at the grave of an illustrious exile ; it is humanity doing homage to one greater than Napoleon ; it is conscience reproving each for his own evil works. But it does not signify any change of opinion in reference to the works of the deceased. Those works were the same morally, and in the judgment of God, when the pleasant fruits were being gathered and the painful penalties were being exacted ; when he uttered his imperial edicts and when he signed the terms of surrender ; when he rode proudly at the head of mighty armies and when he was led captive to a German prison ; when multitudes rent the air with plaudits and when they cast down his busts and yelled execration on his name ; when he shone in splendour at the Tuileries and when he died in exile at Chislehurst ; and though, perhaps, there is a tendency to an excess of gen-

erosity in some of the public references made to him at the present moment, the pulpit, at least, is bound, at whatever risk of seeming to oppose a popular sentiment in itself honourable, to stand forth amid all varying tides of public opinion as a faithful witness to the unvarying laws of righteousness and truth, and, without daring to judge individuals, ever to uphold, equally in the case of prince and peasant, of those whose deeds are done in the closet or on the housetop, affecting whole nations, or only a single household, those eternal principles which success or failure, applause or censure, life or death, cannot change ; and so it is well to be reminded on the present occasion that when men die, whatever their rank, condition, or repute, for good or for evil, "their works do follow them."

And now, brethren, passing away from the immediate occasion of these remarks, let me still trespass upon your kind indulgence, keeping punctually within the hour properly prescribed for this service. Let me endeavour in a few words to expound the text as it stands before us.

"Their works do follow them." This is, as I before said, true of all men, and it is true in these three ways. It is true as regards the influence of our works on other people ; it is true as regards the influence of our works on ourselves ; it is true as regards our works in the estimation of God, and in connection with the final judgment.

All men's works follow them in their influence on other people. It is obvious. Here is a man in poverty ; a little help will enable him to recover his position. Here is a man in business difficulty : you know him ; you know his honesty ; you know the difficulty that has come upon him through no fault of his own. A little aid may tide him over the difficulty. You forget the act, but it has been the temporal saving of him. He might have failed, but, on the contrary, he has achieved success. But your neglect would have followed as disaster to him. You may forget both your act of kindness or your neglect or your refusal, but the act follows in its consequences. A person is sick and very poor. A little seasonable help, a visit or two from the doctor or the care of a nurse, may enable that sick person to recover, or the lack of it may result in the sick person's death. You forget the trifling act, or the neglect of it, but

its influence follows. You utter a word of calumny about a fellow-creature and think no more about it, but that calumny grows and circulates to the disadvantage of the person calumniated. So with reference to our indirect influence; our character and daily conduct affects others for good or evil. We need not be always preaching. Sometimes it may be that there are persons who talk too much and do too little. But all we do, and the spirit and tendency of our whole lives, have an influence upon other people. Our works follow us. An author's works follow him long after he has passed away. A preacher dies, but it is not when he ceases to live that he ceases to work. The effects of his ministry are felt when he is gone. Of righteous Abel, it is said: "He being dead yet speaketh." It is true of all men that their works follow them. It cannot but be so.

Secondly, our works follow us in their influence upon ourselves—the doers. Our character (I am not speaking of reputation) is the result of our actions. The character of a man is the total result of the totality of his deeds. Here is a man building his house. He has a brick in his hand; he puts it in its place. What is he doing? Now he is putting another brick there. Is it all? No, his works follow, and the result is a house of a certain size, and of a certain shape. Here is a sculptor: Every blow of the chisel tells. What is he doing? The statue is the result of all these little actions which thus follow and remain. In education, what man is intellectually, is in great degree the result of the diligence with which he has improved his opportunities when a learner. Young people little think what they are doing when they are neglecting the precious opportunities of youth. Your neglect of those opportunities, and your want of diligence, will follow you through life. Success or failure, in most cases, is the result following the action of youth—following a person as long as he lives. Thus there is a present reward and a present punishment in all our moral actions. Every good thing we do helps to make us good. Every good word spoken or feeling cherished, has its tendency in improving our own moral character, and every bad work has, on the contrary, an injurious effect. Whether an action is known or not, whether it is recorded or not, whether or not in a direct

manner every action is rewarded or punished, the effect—the necessary effect—of the action upon ourselves is evil or good, according to the action of the doer. He may believe, or he may not believe, in a future retribution, but there is a present retribution. We cannot get rid of the fact that we are under moral government, a system of retribution. In every good work, I benefit myself, and there is the reward; and in a deliberately bad action, there is an injury done to myself. Every sin that we commit is a suicidal blow struck upon our own moral nature. "Their works do follow them."

And then as regards the judgments of God. We read about the book which shall be opened at the last great day. God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether "it be good or whether it be bad." We have no time to enlarge upon this. It will be taken for granted by those who acknowledge the truth of God's word. I am reminded of the African, of whom Mr. Moffatt, the distinguished missionary, speaks, who had killed multitudes, and who, when he was being taught the great doctrine of the resurrection, brought his spear heavily upon the ground and exclaimed: "I have killed many men; will they rise up again; and must I meet them again?" Yes! and all the actions we have performed will rise up again and meet us. Our deeds will assuredly follow us. Some there are who go on through life recklessly, doing deeds which, to their everlasting misery, will follow them. You are scattering—what? Eggs! You don't think it, but there is vitality in them. You are scattering them right and left as you go along. They are hatching, and now you are surrounded by butterflies, beautiful, sparkling in the sunshine, and you admire the look of those butterflies as they fly about you,—but lo! they are changing. There is a transformation. As they fly they become wasps, hornets—stinging hornets. You can't get rid of them. They buzz about you. They follow you up to the judgment—aye, and beyond the judgment. "Their works do follow them." I was very much struck by the remark of a negro preacher, whom I heard at Chicago, who said: "You who are wicked, mind what you are about. Your wickednesses will be your companions by and bye." "Their works do follow them." A man's wealth does not *follow him*; but the injustice and parsimony and miserliness

with which he accumulated it, will follow him ; or the generous or honourable way in which he either acquired or dispensed it, will follow him—but the money won't. The pleasure of sin won't follow the sin, but the guilt of it will follow. Then says some one, "What must I do to be saved?" If this is the influence of our deeds upon ourselves (and we have all done evil deeds enough to destroy us) what must we do to be saved? I know no answer to such a question, but the answer which the gospel gives—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." His righteousness and mediatorial death are accepted for us. He, by His Spirit, can marvellously and mysteriously neutralise the evil results of our bad actions in ourselves, and he can remove the guilt of our actions, and so by believing in Him the whole of our text will be appropriate: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours and their works do follow them." "I heard a voice from heaven"—authoritatively, "write"—permanent, a decree: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. They rest from their labours." They die in the Lord, trusting the Lord, obeying the Lord, serving the Lord, waiting for the Lord. "They rest from their labours," not from the activity of holy service, but from painful toil, and grief, and sorrow, and care, and conflict, and "their works do follow them." Their works do not go in advance of them. They don't go first to claim a place in heaven, for no man's works can do that. Christ's works go first. Christ and his righteousness ; Christ and his atonement. He goes first and pleads for us and opens the door for us, and we are accepted on the grounds of His work, and then it is also true that our works follow us. "By deeds of the law shall no man living be justified," but we are "justified freely by His grace," and then our works follow. The good works continue to follow in their effects on other people. They necessarily follow in their effects on ourselves, for our fitness for heaven is the result of the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit qualifying us for holy works and enjoyments yonder. And they follow as regards the judgment. There is such a thing as the doctrine of Christian reward. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love." There is the

reward to the possessor of ten talents, and there is the reward to the possessor of five, and Jesus said that "a cup of cold water given in my name shall not lose its reward." Christians will have no need to plead any merits of their own. They will not be disposed so to plead. They will say, "Unprofitable servants!" "God be merciful to me a sinner." But we have an Advocate who undertakes the cause of every sinner who trusts in Him; he will magnify any work in us that is really good, and will present our case in the best possible way. There is nothing better for us to do than to acknowledge the truth that we are unworthy, and we may be sure that our Advocate above will put the best aspect upon our good works, for whatever good there is in us is His own work in us. I am now reminded of the departure of one who has lived a long, a godly, and useful life. The Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel, who has been so long and so faithful a preacher of the gospel in this metropolis, has passed away within the last day or two. And that city merchant, whom I mentioned last Tuesday, who spoke of himself so humbly as "the vilest of the vile," has also since then passed away, triumphing in the Christian's glorious hope. He lived for the Lord in the uprightness with which he conducted his business, in the beautifulness of his family relationships and in the fervent humility of his piety, and now he has "died in the Lord." With eternity in view, and utterly self-abased, his language was

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
"Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

And thus rejoicing in hope through Him whose works are perfect, and whose death is all-sufficient, he fell asleep in Jesus. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me: Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labour and their works do follow them."

THE LOSS OF THE NORTHFLEET.

A SERMON,

BY THE REV. NEWMAN HALL, LL.B.

Preached at St. James's Hall, February 2nd, 1873.

“They all slumbered and slept ; and at midnight there was a cry made.”—Matthew xxv, 6.

A SAD and terrible illustration of my text has just occurred. We think of that vessel full of emigrants setting forth with joyful expectation. We see her tossing about in the Channel, then coming to an anchor ; and the large family on board retiring to slumber, sure of peace and safety. We hear the terrible crash in the dark ; and then the loud and bitter lament and piercing cry that went up to heaven. “They all slumbered and slept, and at midnight there was a cry made.”

I need not enter into a detailed narrative of an occurrence with which you are painfully familiar in all its particulars. But I shall proceed to direct your attention very simply to a few obvious lessons that may be gathered from this occurrence.

First, let us think of *the uncertainty of human life*. This is a lesson that is always being taught us, but we never learn it too well. We are sometimes, perhaps, disposed to overrate the mystery connected with this uncertainty. Here is

a little infant which has been longed for, and welcomed with joy and with thankfulness. It is a lovely flower :—alas ! “no sooner born than blasted”—a priceless treasure given only to be snatched away from the fond mother’s embraces. There is a youth or a maiden, on whose culture time, money, and care have been ungrudgingly spent, just ready to take a fitting place in the world, snatched away when the future is all opening, bright and beautiful. How mysterious that all such love, and care, and toil should be wasted ! And then there is the man full of strength, and the woman with household cares and family ties, in the midst of a busy and useful life, snatched away when so much depends on them. You do not wonder at the old and the infirm passing away, but such cases as these are felt to be mysteries of Providence. Yet, if we consider, there is not so much mystery as we might suppose. Uncertainty is evidently a great law of human life : not uncertainty as regards God, but uncertainty as regards ourselves. It is evidently the law. Now we may say a different state of things would be better, but if there is a certain law and we admit it, we must not be surprised at the particulars which go to make up the general law. But would a change of the law be an improvement ? Take the average of human life ; say thirty or thirty-five years. Would it be better for all men and women to live till they become thirty-five, and then to die just in the same year, in the same month, in the same day ? Does it not seem better that we should have the hope of living to be eighty—though there may be the possibility of dying at *fifteen or five* ? Many reasons might be given to show that

this is better than the fixity of human life at the average. Does it not develop human energies, physical, mental, moral power? Religiously, this uncertainty surely has its advantage. If every one was sure of living till thirty-five, would not there be a greater tendency to neglect the affairs of the soul and eternity, knowing that there were so many years to live; and then having lived so many years cultivating the habit of ungodliness, would it not be more difficult, might it not be morally impossible, to turn from evil ways? Well, then, admitting that this is the law, and that it is a beneficent law, we must make up our minds to the uncertainty of life. For if the law be good, it is good that it be carried out; and for this end it is necessary that people should die at all ages, and under all possible circumstances. Therefore, admitting the law, there is no mystery that little babies should die, that young men and maidens, fully grown men and women in the midst of duties and responsibilities, should pass away, in order to secure this uncertainty, so that none may anticipate when the end may be.

In the present instance, this uncertainty was set forth very strikingly. We are taught that in the beginning of an enterprise and in the brightness of our hopes and expectations we may be cut off. Emigrants expecting in another land to begin a new life, having made their arrangements and preparations, little thought that they would never reach that land. And so we may be cut off in the midst of our plans. Who is there that has not plans for the future? domestic plans, business plans, travelling plans, arrangements

that stretch onward for yourselves, for your children, for your friends. We do not know that we shall ever carry them out. Let us make our plans and arrangements wisely and prudently, but ever let us make them humbly, depending on God. It is not necessary always to put "D.V." in your letters to indicate a reverential mind. This may be written without reverence in the heart, but let us make all our arrangements and plans with a humble dependence upon God's protection, and let us not plan anything which we should be ashamed of if we were called into the presence of God while still prosecuting it and before we had accomplished it.

Then, again, these persons thought they were quite safe. They were in a good anchorage. They were in a sheltered bay. There were vessels near them. What danger could there be? They said "peace and safety," yet sudden destruction came upon them. So when we feel we are safe in our youth and health, and when we are expecting to grow up to manhood or old age, danger may be at our door. I would rather see youthful piety develope itself in manly and womanly strength and beauty than in a premature death—but we never can tell what *may* be. The strongest of us may go before the very weakest. Let us be ever ready.

Then, again, these persons were asleep, and in the midst of slumber they were aroused to go into the presence of their Judge. And so it may be with us. We may lie down to sleep—we may wake up in eternity. How appropriate *the evening prayer*—

*"Forgive me Lord for Thy dear Son,
The ills which I this day have done,*

That with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be."

Let us be at peace with God before we lie down to sleep. We may not wake up in this world to seek forgiveness. Let us be at peace with our neighbour. Let us not lie down to rest cultivating enmity, spite, and an unforgiving spirit. We may have no opportunity of reconciliation. Let us always then live as those who are prepared to die. The fault of those who in this parable are set forth as the foolish virgins was not slumbering and sleeping. We are told "they *all* slumbered and slept while the bridegroom tarried." They were not wrong in doing this. They were tired. Human nature needed repose. The wise were wise because they took oil in their lamps, and the foolish were foolish because they neglected this precaution. They were not foolish because they slept. "They all slumbered and slept." But when they were suddenly aroused the wise virgins had oil already, and the foolish had no oil in their vessels. We must do the work of this world. We are not to shut ourselves up as monks or nuns, or avoid the cares and toils which make us need slumber. There is no want of religion in doing anything that God has made natural and necessary for human welfare. We may all work ; we may all do our daily business, we may all enjoy God's daily gifts, and when wearied with the work of the day, we may slumber and sleep, but oh ! let us see to it that we have the oil of grace in our hearts, and that if diligent in business we are fervent in spirit ; that *in* the world we are not of the world *and that wherever* we are, and whatever we are doing, when

the cry is made, "Beheld the Bridegroom cometh," we may be ready to go forth to meet Him.

This uncertainty should prompt us to care for others. If human life is so uncertain let us not only be ourselves ready, but let us also do what we can to do good to our neighbour, seeing that we don't know but it is the last opportunity we may have. I have been told of meetings that have been held where some of these emigrants were present where they received religious tracts and religious counsel, and where prayer was offered for and with them. The agents of one of our excellent societies, having for their object the benefit of seamen and emigrants, went on board the vessel at Gravesend, held services, and distributed bibles and religious tracts. Those agents would feel pained now, if having had the opportunity, they had neglected it. It was the only opportunity. Who can tell but those words spoken, or read, may have led some of the people to a preparation for eternity which they did not before possess? It is sometimes difficult to speak to individuals about their souls, as there may be an apparent assumption of superiority in it. But from fear of giving offence do we not often err on the opposite side in neglecting to warn when an opportunity is given us? If we saw a vessel on a wrong tack, sailing towards sunken rocks or quicksands, and we knew the danger and the crew did not seem to know it, would it not be our duty to warn them? And if we did not, and they were wrecked, should not we feel some reproach? Are there not those of our friends and neighbours about whom we cannot but fear that they are on their way to *destruction*, and if we have the opportunity of saying a warn-

ing word in love and tell them of the Lord Jesus Christ, should we not embrace it?

I remember reading an anecdote of Dr. Chalmers to this effect :—He visited with others at the house of a rich man. There was the festive party at night, and at its close they retired to sleep. There was a gentleman there—frivolous, worldly, careless about spiritual things. In the morning he was found dead in his bed, and Dr. Chalmers lamented, not that he was at the house, and not that he was meeting with this gentleman and with others, but, that having had the opportunity of saying a word to him about his soul and eternity he neglected it, and then it was impossible. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.” The bible says, “Exhort one-another daily while it is called to-day.” It may be the only day you may have. And, then, here is this promise—“If any of you do err from the faith and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

II.—Consider next the diabolical conduct of the steamer that struck the emigrant vessel. I use the term advisedly—diabolical, coming on in the darkness, silently, nearer and nearer, aiming a deadly blow, warned by the light, warned by the shouting, yet still pressing on, delivering the blow by which that vessel foundered, backing off, pursuing its way, lost in the darkness—just to escape the claim for damages ! Diabolical ! Let us hope that all Europe will unite for the

punishing of a crime so contrary to the noble generosity which we associate with seamen. Many have suffered on the gallows whose criminality as murderers has been far less than that of those on whom the responsibility of this act may rest. But is not this just what the devil does? Does not the tempter so come? Do not worldly pleasures, do not bad and wicked companions so come? Never without our alluring them. Never (as was not so in this case) without responsibility on our part. We tamper with sin. We trifle with it. We beckon it on, and then, when we are unsuspecting, in darkness, and when we are slumbering and sleeping, then the spiritual enemy bears down on us in the form of some mighty temptation for which we are not prepared, and smites the soul to death. Overwhelmed with the conviction of ruin, the soul sinks in utter despair, and the world can render no help, and those wicked companions laugh at your calamity, and your victorious foe leaves you to darkness and death. Oh! let us beware what we do when we trifle with temptation. If we feel horror at the conduct of that steamer, let us feel righteous horror and hatred of sin.

III.—Consider the noble conduct of the captain. His great object was to preserve the lives of the women. We cannot but contrast the conduct on board the “Northfleet” with that on board the “Birkenhead”—the circumstances of the loss of which will never be forgotten in the annals of the sea, or the annals of our country and of our army. Knowing the ship was about to sink, those noble troops drawn up on deck in military array, as on parade, stood motionless while the women were lowered into the boats—

the women in their weakness and these brave men in their strength—not one of them stirring from the rank, and so they sank to their watery, but ever-to-be-honoured grave. True heroism ! Greater bravery than attacking a battery, than charging the lines of the foe. On the “Northfleet” there was no discipline. Here there was a cowardly rush on the part of the strong—trampling upon the weak in order to save themselves. Some might say—“Well, should not the men be saved first? Is not an able-bodied man of more value to the State than a weak woman and a little child?” Would not utility say “Save the strong ones first?” No, even on that low ground this would not be best. When there is danger, if the men who are strong save themselves first, then the women who are weak cannot save themselves, and they are lost certainly ; whereas if the strong men will first of all save the weak, they will be able, in most cases, to save themselves last. But, suppose it should not be so, still it is better, more useful, because more noble and more generous, that there should be ever cultivated in a people this spirit of protecting the weak. The captain was noble in trying to carry out this principle, and, as I think, justified in all the means he used.

You admire the captain ; you think of him bidding farewell to his young wife, giving up all his cherished hopes and going down heroically with the ship. Have you no enthusiasm for Jesus? Can we read stories like this of our fellow men without enthusiasm, and think nothing of Him who gave Himself for us, who died for our sins voluntarily? The captain was there as a matter of necessity. He only did his duty, and every brave man would say “he just did what was

right, and I trust I would do the same." Jesus was under no obligation, but the obligation of love, to lay down His life for us. Can we be cold and without admiration, without zealous love for Him who gave Himself for us?

IV.—Again, think of the frantic struggle for life—the pushing, trampling, almost murdering one another, the clutching every floating thing; the clinging eagerly to the rigging—all for precious life. But what is life compared to the soul? We have life only for a time. We must die sooner or later. For a man to strive to live a little longer than he otherwise would live—we feel to be right, and the effort to do so, within the limit of duty, laudable. Shall we then be indifferent to the spiritual and eternal life? And can it be that there are those here, who would struggle, not in a cowardly way we would trust, but in a right and manly way, to preserve their bodily life, and are you taking no pains to preserve your soul from death? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." We shall not be saved by wishing it. We shall not be saved by dreaming of it. Strive for it. "The Kingdom of heaven" we are told, "suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." Why were these unfortunate people so earnest? They considered that the boats were not big enough for the saving of them all, and so because they thought there was salvation only for a few, each was determined if possible to be one of those few. It has sometimes occurred to me that if we preachers were to say that in the congregation before us only one in ten, or one in five could be saved, there would perhaps be greater anxiety on the part of some to be among those few for whom alone there was salvation. Will you be less earnest because salvation is provided for every one, because salvation is offered to everyone? If you would be earnest, if you thought there

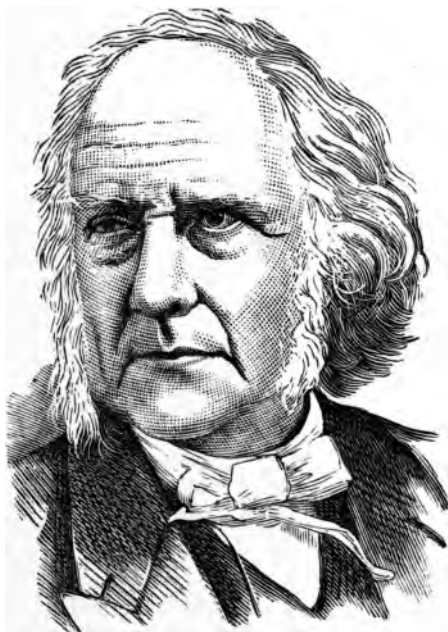
was salvation only for some us, will you be less earnest because there is salvation offered to all of us?

V.—There were sad separations between the Captain and his young wife, between parents and children, when they kissed one another, feeling that they would not meet again! But there will be other separations still worse by-and-bye, when all before the Throne will be divided as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats—some on the right hand, some on the left; some who were dear to one another in this world separated from one another in the next world. Oh! shall we not seek to be together with those whom we loved on earth? Is there not separation even now? May not persons be together in the ordinary sense, and yet separated far and wide spiritually? Those who are sitting at the same board together may be very far sundered. If one loves Christ and the other loves the world—if one is in the broad road and the other in the narrow road—if there is no sympathy with one another on the greatest of all subjects—if there is this seeking of different ends on the way to a different goal, there is separation now. Some of you have parents and friends in heaven; are you on the way to meet them? You would not take them out of heaven in order to be together with you? No! you must seek the same heaven. There are some here whose best friends are walking in the way of life, and you are walking perhaps in the road that leads to death. This separation is increasing every day. You are getting further and further apart. You wish to be together. Would you have that friend of yours, who is walking holily, walk in your way? Surely not? then you must walk in their way. Throw in your lot with them, and say, “Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God.”

VI.—Another lesson. Safety was near but not secured.

There was the land, and vessels at anchor very near, and many boats available, and yet though there was the possibility of saving all who perished, they went to the bottom. There is salvation near to every one of us, salvation provided, salvation offered, salvation that may be secured now. Shall it be that any here shall perish? We shall perish if we trifle with the offer. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" In the case of the "Northfleet" it was not the neglect of those that perished that led to their destruction, but if we are lost it will be our own neglect—not because there was no salvation, and not because the salvation was too far off, but because we trifled when we should have been in earnest, because we refused when we should have accepted, for Jesus is the saviour of the soul, and He waits to save every one of us now.

VII.—One other lesson. They made signals of distress but the signals were not understood. Their blue lights and rockets were supposed to be merely requests for a pilot. But Christ will not fail to interpret rightly every signal sent up by a contrite sinner. The tear of penitence, the sigh for pardon, the earliest step of the poor prodigal, these are signals sent up to a God of mercy. He knows the meaning of your earnest desire and your deep sorrow. None shall perish who call upon Him. He will in no wise cast out. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find." "He delighteth in mercy, and he waiteth to be gracious."



Thomas Fitts

THOMAS GUTHRIE.

A SERMON,

By ARTHUR MURSELL.

Preached at London (Stockwell), March 2nd, 1873.

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.”
—Luke xix. 41.

WHOEVER has seen the city of Edinburgh, either by day or night, if he be a lover of the picturesque, will be able to appreciate almost any terms of admiration which may be expressed upon the spectacle. It is questionable if the world contains another city more “beautiful for situation.” The passenger along the chief thoroughfare of modern Edinburgh has upon one side of him a long vista of a mile of stately buildings, where sumptuous bijouterie and tasteful wares are temptingly dispread in rich profusion; and upon the other a green garden glade, carpeting the base of the huge rock from which the castle frowns defiantly, and seems to flash a Bruce-like glance from its battlements, and shake the plume of Wallace from its walls. Each step along the way is a gradus of the national history, and the children seem to grow tender and romantic as they romp where Wilson beams in bronze and rest where Scott sits in stone. Passing the National Museum, which recalls the Parthenon of Greece, the pillars of the monuments of the mighty, on the Calton Hill, stand out against the sky-light and close in the vista. There, round the Nelson Tower, cluster memorials of Burns, of Playfair, and of Dugald Stewart, and of other names of which their countrymen and the world are proud. While, to the right, the crags and the prouder peak of Arthur’s Seat couch, lion-like, over the city roofs. It is a stiff and breezy climb to the summit of that historic hill. But Scotias’s sons are hardy, and many a doughty wight has scaled it ere the town

has been awake, and watched the sunrise from its brow. It needs no guide to show how like a drowsy lion the great hill is in outline, with its half-closed eyes blinking at the castle across the city to the west. Among these early climbers there was wont to sally, years ago, one stalwart pilgrim, who went there to read. He took no book with him in his hand, for the landscape was his library, and the silence was his sage. Past the closed gates of ancient Holyrood, drinking in memories as he went, striding the rugged spurs of the acclivity in the morning twilight; stopping to take a draught at cool St. Ronan's well, laving his soul in legendry as he drank, the climber gained the top, and sat alone musing as he plucked the wild thyme and shook the dew-drops from the lion's heathery mane. No common traveller could occupy this vantage ground and scan the scene without a thrill lifting him up to wonderment, much less this pilgrim, whose soul was a mirror for beauty's face to smile in, and whose heart was a harp for nature's hand to touch. No detail of that wondrous panorama escaped that watcher's eye, as he bared his head for the morning breeze to play through his thin hair. As the bosom of the Pentland range began to warm and purple in the light, he looked out to the east, where the sun was waking and spreading liberal largesses of gold; and there lay the freshening Forth, with every billow like a dancing flame in the young morning. The hills of Fife are gladdening in the glow, and the stream, as it narrows and winds westward, shows out like silver where Stirling lifts her rugged crown in the horizon. Seaward the Bass Rock juts up into the sky like a great boss of brass, as the tiptoed dawn flings out its nascent yellow on the east, and white-sailed craft dart from the little creeks, till the great bay seems all alive. No letter in this illuminated volume escapes this student, for he is an omnivorous reader of nature, and he sits and fills his fancy to the brim with poetry and song. The birds shaking *the wing against the sky* sing to him as they greet the new-

born day, and not a blade of grass, or mountain flower, or insect creeping from its bed, but has a voice or picture which he tunes to music or hangs up in his mind, to light up truth to thousands who shall be entranced by eloquence, and swayed by love. The rough fishers in the little ships, as they spread their broad sheets for the voyage, spread canvas for the easel of an artist, whence scenery should glow which should rouse a prayer for sailors from a thousand hearts. Right gladly would he dwell upon this scene alone, revelling in its light and beauty without a shade to dash the picture; but as his eye still travels round, it falls upon the city nestling almost at his feet. There are its towers and steeples, its halls and colleges, beacons of its piety and learning. But there, too, are its teeming streets, its dense, unwholesome wynds and purlieus, wherein vice and fever propagate together; and there are the hundred lairs of the drink-fiend, whose cloven foot has crushed the neck of Scotland's manhood for five hundred years. If that lonely climber thought of the city, and its temples, and its teachers, he thought too of the city, its sins and sorrows. As he saw the flowers opening to the rising sun, and heard the birds singing to the morning, as he watched how blithely nature woke to the new day, he thought of thousands who should greet no real light, and to whom the day should bring no noble task. The worm at his foot crawled forth to worthier purpose than many a ruin of God's image should slink out of his kennel of a home in those dense lanes. Mingling harshly with the lark's early lay there seemed to rise up from the thick human nest below the cry of squalid children, and the curse of unsexed mothers mad with drink. Phantoms and ghosts of pinched humanity rose up before his mind, and on the sweetness of the sweet breath of morning reeked the feculence of physical and moral death. He saw how poverty and vice lay cheek by jowl with wealth and culture, how the lazarus-house festered hard by the school, the pauper pinned outside the *palace gate*, and Satan kept high saturnalia close by the

sanctuary wall. And as he looked once more upon the glorious landscape, and saw the tide fretting its silver foam upon the shore, he thought, "If God in heaven had not taught that tide to ebb and flow, it would subside into a foul stagnation, and life and verdure would be blighted by its breath. If nature had not learned her many harmonies from Him, there would be anarchy and darkness on this scene, instead of the sweetness and light which I behold. Let me go down and try to stir a tide in human hearts to dash its waves of love upon that arid strand; let me essay to sound the keynote of a music which hoarse voices may take up and sing in sacred tune." And he went down to the city, and carried a sad and bleeding heart amongst those noisome closes; and from that sadness there was born a high and hero purpose. He sat down in his study, but the commentary was too dull and dry, and the exegesis was too cold for the text which he had chosen and the sermon that he meditated. He heard the blood of the neglected crying from the altar, and it wrung his heart and stirred his soul. And he went upon the Sabbath morning to the church, with lips anointed with the live coal of a burning message. There was no incense in the Church, no incense that was visible; but, as the preacher spoke, the dainty hearers seemed to choke, as though the vilest stews in all the city had been stirred up before them. There was no subtle plot, no deep analysis, no metaphysical acumen in the sermon. It was a long wail of human suffering, a high-tide wave of passion dashing against the hearts and sympathies of those who heard. And as it rose, it bore upon its flow the sound of the bruised wife's cry, and the drunken husband's curse, of the weak voice of the little child, and the quaver of the old man's croon. It told how men were dying for the want of human help, how hell was belching among the churches, how bodies were starving amidst the gold, and souls were perishing amidst the Gospel. And as he talked of little ones, with *none to take them by the hand*, the pulse of woman's love

stirred in many a maid's and matron's breast, and starvelings were adopted from that moment. And as he pleaded for the cause of ragged schools, first dreamed of by John Pounds, the Portsmouth cobbler, many a canny Scot unloosed his purse-strings and signed rich cheques in firm intent before he left the church. And when the grandees had walked or driven home, the tall form of Thomas Guthrie might be seen in the Grassmarket, or the High Street, or the Canongate, standing beside the plain street preacher as he told the people about Christ crucified. Among the densest of those nests of misery nurseries of hope are opened now. The wildest moral wastes are dappled with the green and fruitful growths of care and culture ; and the roughest noises of the barbarous are drowned by hymns of praise from children's lips. The sturdiest hand which pushed the ploughshare through this wilderness was the hand of Thomas Guthrie. He was the nurse who watched with all a woman's care the little arabs in the schools. And his was the palm which broad-cast the seed from which rich harvests have arisen. There's many a man alive to-day in the north who can tell of times when he has met him laden with toys in his long arms to take to the little ones, and what a ringing shout the boys would raise when their firm friend came into the school, the biggest boy and simplest child in all the place.

With the laying low of this grand head, an Anak of the Anakims has fallen. Philosophy may feel but slender loss, but nature has lost one of the tenderest of her sons. Natures like this do much to sweeten and unstiffen what is crude and stilted amongst the high-born, as well as to lift up and help the fallen. The northern mind is too abstract to be practical in anything but business, and hence the northern pulpit, though rich in erudition and in cultured piety, is often too abstruse and technical to touch the common woes of life. The gospel is preached, and preached in its soundness and its strength. But the message is rather a challenge to the critic than a call to the sinner. It savours more of

the school than of the sanctuary ; and the altar of the Lord is turned into the professor's chair. Hence we have sometimes heard it said in Scotland that Dr. Guthrie's church was chiefly thronged by southern visitors who went to witness his dramatic power, but that his compatriots deemed his preaching uninstructional and wanting in solidity. To the student of theology there may have been but little to satisfy : but no voice has spoken, since the tongue of Chalmers ceased its witness for the truth, with more clarion ring to stir the philanthropic laggart or rouse the spiritual drone to work for truth and Christ, than the voice which now is stilled ; and, without any wish to make detraction from the value of a doctrinal and teaching ministry, we do protest that there is more living fire and more imperishable gold in the heart-evidence which mirrors forth the life of Christ in Christly doings than in that which simply speculates and argues. If "pure religion and undefiled is this, to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world," surely that is the more useful ministry which wields a lash to drive men forth upon the Master's path of doing good, which breaks the seal from parsimonious hearts, which holds a magnet to draw out the inner man to Christ, even though it fail to clear up every doubt upon the doctrine of the headship, or blow off every cobweb of obscurity from the six points of Calvinism. Far be it from our intent to say that Dr. Guthrie was not appreciated in his own country and by his own countrymen. There's many a rugged cheek will glisten wet beside his grave, and many a highland bonnet will be reverently doffed over the sod which hides his dust. There's not a dukery or palace, from the Shetlands to the border, where a sigh will not be breathed that he is gone, and there's not a hovel amidst the crags of St. Kilda or the wilds of the Hebrides where weeping will not have been heard that he shall speak and smile among his native hills no more. We only mean *that when he went into the Church Courts they listened to*

his humour and his declamation as a sort of relief (welcome enough), from the close logic of the champion gladiators, but still, as a distraction from the main point. They looked to him for no fresh light upon a disputed question, only for a little physical unbending ere they set to again. His speech was hailed, like the interval at school between the classes, enjoyable, but not instructive. Perhaps they were right. But if the speeches were not instructive, they were stimulating; and man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of Christ. And, for my part, I find more to live upon in Christ's words of love than even His words of stricter teaching, and find a sweetness in a promise which makes it even dearer than a precept. We are drawn to the speaker the more warmly, because he was too impetuous to be for ever coolly debating. And we shake him by the hand in fancy as we hear the indignant and pathetic ring of his heart-words, as he broke off in the midst of a speech about an Education Bill which his church had been accused of supporting for sectarian ends. "What care I for Free Church, or any church upon earth, in comparison with my desire to save and bless these poor wretched children in the High Street?"

But if the breadth of his purview thus transcended nice distinctions, and the ardour of his temperament engrossed his mind with other toil than splitting hairs, he was ever found upon that side of great Church controversies which involved the sacrifice of self in the cause of spiritual realness and of religious liberty. He moved in the van of that disruption phalanx who gave up Church and manse at the bidding of conscience, and he was ever one of the bravest, if not the subtlest, maintainers of the principle on which the sacrifice was made. The trait which made him a marked man in his time, and which endears him to the memory now that he has passed away, is the broad wealth of humanity which he flung into all he undertook, and which breathed in all he spoke. Whenever his name was mentioned one seemed to hear the thumping of a great heart. There was

something friendly and stimulating in the associations of his life. As the passenger upon a great Atlantic steamer sits in the warm cabin and hears the nervous throb of the big engine beam, and feels that he is near a force which helps him breast the waves, so those who crossed the path of Dr. Guthrie, whether in his company, his sermons, or his books, felt they were moved by a power which propelled them against the stress of adverse things around them, and helped them to leave a wake of honest sympathy behind. To a stranger in the north there is a coldness in the literary atmosphere by which he is surrounded which is sometimes rather numbing. Every one he meets seems waiting to put him through an examination, and make him say his catechism. The intellectual air is rarified and pure, but it is sometimes chilling. I shall not readily forget how keenly this feeling struck upon me more than twenty years ago, when, as a young lad, I went to live a period of school life in the little town of Forfar. It is not the town of all the rest a tutored Celt would specify as Scotland's brightest spot, but still, there was a school-room atmosphere about my life there which did not inspire. Boys and girls walked through the streets with slates and straps of books, and had an inky look, as if they were always writing exercises; and the grown-up people had a preceptorial air which made one look, by instinct, for a cane and ferrule in their hands. One of the most sensible reliefs I ever felt to this sensation was during a long walk into the country, when, having skirted the wooded acres of the Dalhousie demesne, my companion pointed to the smoke of a small town, and said, "That is Brechin, let us go and see the house where Dr. Guthrie was born." There was a fascination to me in the spot I can't describe, and often did I look wistfully from the Forfar school-yard across the twelve miles' interval in the direction of Dr. Guthrie's birthplace, and rejoice that it was possible to be great and good and manly without being a pedant or a *pedagogue*. I little thought at that time that I should live

to treasure among my prizes a kind letter from his hand expressing pleasure that I had asked him to allow me to inscribe to him some papers I was writing about work among city thieves and arabs. The papers never saw the light in a completed form, but if they ever do so, it will be my pride to enrich them with his letter and his name.

It was this rich humanity of his which placed him, in the modes of his vocation, in the details of his mission, and in his lines of thinking, apart from what we may call the professional section of his brethren and compatriots. Dr. Guthrie was a man who would never have been called to fill a chair of faculty in a college. Though his attainments might have qualified him for its duties, and his deep insight into human nature would have helped to fit him for a trainer of young minds, he would have been cramped and restless in such a sphere, and would have chafed against its dignified restrictions. He would teach better in a ragged school than in a divinity hall; and he would play better in the school-yard than he would teach in the school-room. His strong point was sympathy, and when this was roused, as it ever was by need and sorrow, he was apostolic; and hence he was more happy with babies on his knee and children romping round his feet, than in a moral philosophy classroom. Ought we not the rather to have said that in his love for children he was Christlike? The apostles drove the children back; it was Jesus who said, "Let them come to me." And so it was with Dr. Guthrie. They say the scene in the Ragged School when he came in was wonderful. It was not as when the head master enters amongst well-disciplined pupils—a sudden hush of voices and casting down of eyes, and unnatural alacrity of pens and pencils—but a wild shout of pleasure, and a universal smile as though a flood of sunshine had blazed into the room; and books were forgotten, and slates neglected, and work fell from little laps, and stitches came undone, as some little girl *fondles the kind palm* and presses her orphaned cheek

against it, as the long fingers run through her flaxen curls, and roguish boys whisper about a holiday ; and soon the workroom is empty and the playground full. O, he was a bad disciplinarian, was this muser over the city's sorrows, this builder of Ragged Schools ! For my part I love him the better for it. The pedagogic mind is venerable but not lovable. It does not want to be loved ; it would be a trouble and annoyance to it. Love is sentimental, and sentiment is not written in the school-plan. The teaching instinct does not see long rows of playful or dreamy eyes, or of wistful or laughing lips, or of demure or dimpling cheeks ; it does not see a sunny horde of childhood in the group before it ; it only sees an Euclid class, an arithmetic class, or a Virgil class. It cuts them up in sections, more or less efficient at grinding up the primer, digesting tables, or secreting the hornbook and the rudiments. But here was an eye which ranged along those tiny rows, and saw in every twinkling eye a window through which a soul was looking, and with a glance full of humour, gentleness and love, it looked back upon them and made them light up with joy. Here was a heart which thought of the vices which had curtained round their cradle-heads, of the oaths which had mingled with their lullabies, of their foodless homes, and grim surroundings ; and as the drama of their squalid infancy passed before his vivid fancy, deep wells were stirred within his heart, and prayer went, silent but fervent, to the Lord to show them His salvation.

Brethren, this was a brave life, this life which has just passed onward. It took its path through many scenes and among many men. It walked in Highland hamlets, and in foreign lands ; it left its footprints amongst crowds and in strange solitudes ; it stepped across ducal thresholds, and crossed the glittering track of royalty ; and it was ever the same brave, genial, honest presence. But it was bravest when its way was through the darkest haunts, when it pressed forth in the festering dens of poverty and pestilence and

vice, and hung the lantern of immortal hope in the midnight of neglected homes. That head was not the noblest when it towered amongst the courtiers and the statesmen round the Sovereign's throne, but when it bent to pass under the blackened cross-beam of the cotter's hut in the uncleansed stews of Edinburgh. And that shall be a royal mission, if you will but undertake it, which carries you upon the errand of philanthropy where wrongs call for redress, or fallen ask to be uplifted. Royalty may have no embassy on which to send you to foreign courts; but still a task invites you to a thousand courts at home, where you are called as an ambassador for Christ. Christians! you cannot all be eloquent, but you can all be useful. You cannot thrill a crowd with word-magic, but you may save a soul by the magic of the message of Christ crucified. You cannot build a colony of schools, but you can lay a stone into the holy fabric by finding a task in those already founded. An Elijah has ascended, and his mantle falls among you. It falls, not that you may fold it in a statuesque display about an inert form, but that you may carry it wherever a human woe is hidden, or a cry of misery is heard. It falls that you may smite the waters which divide your efforts, sympathies, and prayers from the helpless and distressed, and go over in the name of the Lord God of Elijah, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Accept the challenge—make up your mind to be a worker in the great vineyard of humanity. Such life is like a talisman to charm the soul to duty, and chain the Christian to his task. If Christ wept over Jerusalem because he saw it given to idolatry, if Christian hearts have bled at the wickedness of other cities, is there nothing to call for work and weeping as we look upon this seething Babylon where we live, and where so many thousands die without the light which you might carry them? O, if every Christian took the task the Master lays upon his conscience and his heart, and plied it with his might, should we not hear the jocund sound of the rejoicing of the wilderness and the

dancing of the desert? If every hand which prayer clasps or uplifts to heaven, in chamber oratory, at household altar, or in sanctuary communion, would plunge into the granary of truth and fling the eternal seed of Christ amongst the heart-acres of the human field of London; might not the guerdon of this spiritual husbandry be early seen in the nodding of the fir above the thorn, and the spreading of the myrtle by the briar? If property woke to its responsibilities as well as vaunted its privileges; if labour sought out its duties as well as raved about its rights; if health found its gymnasium on the plain of Christian work as well as in the field of sport; if culture thought of obligation as well as taste; if religion were as active in the race as eager for reward; O, then! how soon might we hear the cock-crow of the morning which should mark the climbing upward of the light of God; how soon might we see the moving of the vapour and the rifting of the cloud which hangs over the homes and hearts of men, and screens off the rose of the aurora! Brethren and sisters! Pray for it; weep for it; work for it. Uprouse ye to a task for Christ. Bestir ye on an errand for the Master. So, when He comes, He shall find you watching and working, waiting and expecting; and the amber of the dawn of the great day shall fall, not upon a sleeping group with loosened loins and oil-spent lamps, and feet unsandalled for a journey, but shall light upon you at some honest human duty, with some cup of cold water in your hand for thirsty lips, some cruise of oil and wine for the fainter by the way, some marks of the Master's cross upon your shoulder. Let there be stains of travel on your feet and furrows of prayer-wrestling on your brow, so that the last trumpet may call forth a worker to his reward and not a drone to his doom. "¶Forasmuch as thou didst it unto one of the least of these, thou didst it unto me. Inasmuch as thou didst it *not* unto one of these thou didst it not to me."

THE SECRET OF FAILURE.

A SERMON.

By ARCHIBALD G. BROWN.

Preached in the East London Tabernacle, March 30th, 1873.

“ Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”—Matthew xvii. 19-20.

THE narrative of which our text forms the climax is so well known that there is little need for me to dwell upon it at any length. Suffice it to say, that a high honour had been conferred upon the three disciples, Peter, James and John. They had been permitted to see the King in his transfiguration glory. Upon Tabor's heights their eyes had seen a bright revelation, and their ears had heard the Father's voice speaking out of the excellent glory, and declaring that the despised Jesus was “his beloved Son.” They had beheld a marvellous change come over the face that was more marred than that of the sons of men, for lo, it did shine as the sun, whilst the humble garments and the gabardine of the man of Nazareth became white and glistening as no fuller on earth could white them. Is it any marvel that impetuous and hot-blooded Peter exclaimed, “it is good for us to be here”? It was a true assertion, though followed by the ignorant suggestion, “let us build here three tabernacles.” Poor Peter! he did not quite know what he was

saying, for he was dazed by the novelty of the surrounding scene. Let us not be too hard on him, or over ready to criticise, for he is not the last who has spoken without knowing what he has said, and with far less excuse. The bright cloud that had overshadowed them, soon lifted itself—bright clouds generally do—and the calm enjoyment of communion was exchanged for the turmoil of earth's conflicts. The disciples, in company with their Lord, came down from the open gate of heaven and soon found themselves face to face with hell's power. The fiercest conflicts with hell generally follow close on the sweetest fellowship with heaven. As they near the base of the mountain, a strange sight meets their view. There is an excited crowd, and in the midst of it they recognize their fellow-labourers. From the crowd there comes the hum of earnest and impassioned conversation. Sometimes a loud peal of laughter greets them. It is evidently ironical. What is all the confusion about? The people are broken up into knots, evidently discussing some subject of deepest interest to all. Such expressions as "dreadful failure," "I thought they could have done it," are easily overheard. Apart from the common people a group of scribes are evidently enjoying themselves. It is from them the bursts of sarcastic laughter proceed. "Ah, ha!" they say, "this is as we would have it. This will keep them quiet for some time. Their influence with the people has evaporated now. Capital! Could not have happened better." Close at hand there stands a man with his hand upon the shoulder of a lad. One look at the boy is enough to show what ails him. The rolling eyes and wild expression both tell of lunacy. He is mad, that is certain. On the father's face there has settled down a look of blank despair. His last hope has failed him. The disciples, however, interest us the most. What *is* the matter with them? Did you ever see a more crest-fallen company? They are most *decidedly down* about something. They look for all the *world as if they had made a gigantic failure.* And so they

had, as was soon proved. No sooner is Christ recognised than all rush pell-mell to him. The secret is soon out, for there are many to tell it. It was this. Yonder father had brought his boy to them in order to have the devil cast out. They had done their best to exorcise the spirit but had miserably failed. It had laughed all their efforts to scorn, and mockingly glared at them through the lad's frenzied eyes. They were thoroughly beat, and everybody knew it. Comprehending at a glance the necessities of the situation, the Lord called out to the father, "Bring him unto me." The word of power is spoken in a moment, and at the next the lad is prostrate at his feet, torn and well-nigh dead. But in that moment the devil had been dragged from his breast. Taking the senseless lad by the hand he raises him up; health returns; he delivers him to his father. The crowd, astonished at the suddenness with which defeat has been changed into victory, forget the disciples in their admiration of the Lord, and doubtless hundreds of tongues declare, "Ah, there is no comparison, after all, between the servants and their Master." The excitement being over, the crowd soon melts away and leaves the Saviour alone with his disciples. It was then, that drawing him apart from any stragglers that might have remained behind, they asked the important question, "Why could not we cast him out?" The answer was ready to hand, "Because of your unbelief." Here was the cause of their defeat; here the secret of their failure. May the Lord help us, as we seek to meditate on a theme as important to us as to them. What labourer for the Lord present—and there are many here—has never had a similar experience to the disciples? Perhaps it may be similarly explained. Let us then to our subject.

I. THE SECRET OF FAILURE.

That they had failed was certain. There was no question about it. There could be no two opinions in reference to the matter. They had failed and they knew it. They had failed and they confessed it. They could not cast the devil

out and they said so. Now the failure was *complete*. It was no break down in the middle of the work when they had done sufficient to lessen their shame. It was a break down at the outset. It was a failure, not in the commencement but to commence at all. There was no one redeeming point in the whole attempted transaction. The hold of the devil on the lad had not been even loosened, far less broken. He was as mad as ever, after all their efforts. The demon had not so much as been shaken in his stronghold. It was a thorough and entire collapse on their part. But worse still, it was a *public* failure. It would have been bad enough had it occurred in some private room where they were experimenting; but before the eyes of a multitude it was dreadful. Had they been alone they might have bound each other to perpetual secrecy, but now it would be the talk of the neighbourhood in a few hours, besides which—and this was the bitterest drop in their cup—the scribes had seen their futile attempts. How they gloated over it! No fear of their not making it known! It was too good a weapon for them to let lie idle. Now, perhaps, some may say, “Such a thought is very little indeed; a failure is a failure, whether anybody knows it or not.” True, quite true, but it is natural to be little, and there are few, if any, who would not prefer looking small when there are none to see than when there are plenty to laugh. A public collapse is the most uncomfortable thing in the world, and it requires no ordinary grace to bear it with equanimity. Remember also that this failure was most *humiliating* in its nature. It was a boy that beat them. Had it been some brawny giant, with a legion of devils in him, they might have pleaded that it was an exceptional case. But all the grown-up disciples had failed with a lad, and he with only one devil in him. Besides which they could not but have remembered how their Lord’s prestige would suffer, and this, if their hearts were at all right, must have been most painful to think on. In plain language they had made a mess of it, and were in

a pretty plight. Their Lord's honour and their own future usefulness seemed all at stake. Have none of us ever felt the same? Think ye there are no ministers, missionaries and teachers passing through the same torture to-day! I **tr**ow there are hundreds, and my heart's sympathy is with them. O, be slow to reproach the unsuccessful, for he has enough to bear in his own soul, and forget not that a man's anguish in failure is proportioned to his anxiety to succeed. Some need but little pity in their non-success, for they aim at nothing more. Their hearts know no high ambition after usefulness, and therefore know no torture when 'tis wanting. But 'tis otherwise with some. They *do* want to cast out devils. Their whole life is consecrated to this object. They pray for it, yearn after it, weep after it, and when they fail, weep over it. O, disconsolate worker for God, coin songs out of your sorrow! If failure grieve you, let your grief over failure comfort you. At least, it shows that your desires and aims are right. You are trying to accomplish good or you would not mourn its absence. You are aiming at results or you would be satisfied with the mere performance of your duties. Now we learn from the history that *workers may find their failure a mystery to themselves*. The disciples did. Their question proves it: "Why could not we cast him out?" They were powerless to explain their own want of success, for there were so many things calculated to make them expect a different result. They were first of all, *Christ's true disciples*. This they could not doubt. They had been called from the world into his companionship. If they chose him it was because he had first chosen them. If they loved him their love was but a reponse to his. They were not like Jannes and Jambres, Egyptians in heart, though seeking to do the work of a Moses. They were loyal in their hearts, and yet were left to fail like this. It was unaccountable! They were moreover (they might have argued) his *recognized workers*. They were no interlopers, taking upon themselves a work never intended for them. They

were not of those who run without being sent, and speak without being called. They were the Lord's accredited servants. Their credentials were unquestionable. In trying to cast out this devil there was no attempt to exceed their orders. It was in perfect obedience to them. As this is an important point, let me ask you to refer to scripture. In the tenth chapter of this gospel, at the seventh verse, you read, "and as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, *cast out devils.*" Here was a direct command for doing the very thing they had tried to do and failed. The mystery of their failure grows upon them the more they think upon it. Doubtless, also, they had *set about it in the right way*. There is no ground for supposing they had tried any other power than that latent in the name of Jesus. It were unjustifiable for us to imagine they had called upon the devil in their own name, and it were an infamy to harbour the thought that they had attempted to cast out the devil by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. No, they had gone about the work in the correct style, and yet they had completely failed. Now, doubtless the remembrance of these three facts intensified the sorrow and increased the amazement of the disciples. I know it does with unsuccessful workers now. Let me draw the picture of a servant of the Lord that has its original in many a pulpit or class-room to-day. He is a man about whose conversion there can be no doubt, yea, to doubt it himself would be an impossibility. He has the witness of the Spirit within that he is born of God. He knows for a certainty that he loves Christ, though he may be in doubt about other matters. He is living in the enjoyment of his Saviour's presence, and is in daily receipt of love tokens from his Lord. Everything about his soul seems to prosper, though, if you were to ask him, he would say the reverse. He is humble, meek, loving and prayerful. He *seems* just the one who could best bear great prosperity, for *he thinks so little of himself*. Yet he has it not. He

preaches with tears, and scatters the seed weeping, but hardly ever knows what it is to shout a harvest song. He seems to have no power to awaken enthusiasm in church members, or anxiety of soul in the congregation. His want of success preys upon his spirit, and a depressed spirit plays havoc with his health. He cannot make his failure out. Often does he groan in secret, "O Lord, why is it? If I had cause to doubt my discipleship I could understand it; but I know I am thine, and Thou also knowest that it is my desire to live in fellowship with Thee. My relationship with Thee makes this non-success the more mysterious and the harder to bear." He has, moreover, no doubt as to his call to the work. He has heard as distinctly as if uttered with human voice, "Preach the word, cast out devils." He remembers well the time when he was thrust out to the work by an invisible but all-powerful hand. The "woe be unto me if I preach not the gospel" is still upon him. He could sooner doubt his existence than his call to the work. To give it up would be—well, no words can describe what it would be. His life's happiness is bound up in his work; rob him of that and you rob him of all. Moreover, there has been a time when he seemed to possess some power. Devils have acknowledged the might of the name he uttered. In days gone past heaven has approved his mission; but now heaven seems to have forgotten him and hell appears to deride him. Why is it? Then again, and this is his greatest stumbling-block, he knows he has used no wrong means to obtain success in his aims. He can call God to witness that he has stuck by the old truths of the gospel and refused all modern speculative novelties. He has set about the work in the old-fashioned scripture-prescribed way. With Paul he has declared, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He has refused to stoop to the low tricks of sensationalism, that seem now so much in vogue. Wild though, perhaps, was his life before conversion, he has sternly refused to rake up the filthy past

and dilate upon it, in order to satisfy the impure cravings of the public. He has said, again and again, "If I succeed it shall be by the presentation and uplifting of Jesus, and Him alone. I will court no help from the old devil once within me, now, thank God, cast out." But—and here is the mystery—all seems in vain. The very name of Jesus appears to lose its potent spell when uttered by his lips. Sermon after sermon is preached, but no demoniac is found sitting clothed and in his right mind, as the result. The man's work, judged by any ordinary standard, is a failure. It is a wonder to all who know him, and it is the most painful mystery to himself. Where is the explanation to be found? This leads us to our Lord's answer, "Because of your unbelief." Here Christ places his finger upon the secret spring of failure with all the directness of the needle of the compass. Want of faith was at the root of the whole matter. Now, here I shall point out a fact that perhaps many of you have over-looked in your previous reading of this history.

There was a want of faith *on both sides*. It was not only in the disciples but in the father of the child. Granted, that our Lord says "*your* unbelief," yet that in no wise affects the force of our argument. The unbelief of the father required the higher faith of the disciples, which was wanting. Let us for a moment or two look at the difficulty their little faith met in the father. He was a doubter. Before Jesus uttered a word of rebuke to His disciples, he said to him, "Oh faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? Bring him hither to me." It is worthy of note also, that before he received the longed-for blessing, his faith had to grow. Mark, in his account of this miracle, records the fact, that before the devil was cast out of the lad a confession of faith was drawn from the father's lips. "Lord," said he, "I believe, help thou my unbelief." Jesus said unto him, "If *thou* canst believe, all things are possible."

Here then was one cause of the failure. *The disciples with little faith were trying to bless a man with less.* Ah, friends, there is such a thing as unbelief in the pew as well as in the pulpit! many a man is more to be pitied than criticised for his want of visible success. He is suffering through the sins of others. Possessed of only very ordinary faith himself, he is no match for a people possessed of far less. Backed up by a praying and believing people he might do something, but his little spark of faith falling on the wet blanket of their unbelief fails to scorch it, much less dry and burn it through. Remember, that it is said of the peerless preacher, "He could there do no mighty work because of their unbelief." Is it any marvel then, that surrounded by unbelief, some of his disciples can do no work at all? O, my hearers, whilst willing to take the giant's share of unbelief, I ask you if you are all clear in the matter? Though we have had conversions by the score, might we not have had them by the hundred had my want of faith not been supplemented by your unbelief? But there can be no question that the chiefest hindrance to success was their own personal lack of faith. Had their belief been anywhere near perfection it would have triumphed over his unbelief; it would have laid hold upon the rugged tops of his mountain of doubts, plucked it up by the roots, and said, "Be thou cast into the sea." The faith that can triumph over others' unbelief, is faith of the highest kind. Alas, how few possess it? The faith of the majority is of that ordinary kind, that does very well in company but is powerless when alone. Most logs will burn with tolerable brightness in a heap, but it is only occasionally you come across one so full of turpentine that it will flare and blaze away solitary and unassisted by other fires. So with Christians. But when you do come across such a one it is worth while to stop and look. You may well turn aside to see this great sight, for be sure that when a bush burns by itself in a wilderness, God is in the midst of it.

Nothing short of an indwelling God can keep a lonely saint blazing, yet unconsumed. I know of no grander sight under heaven than that of a man "believing down" all opposition and forcing his way through every obstacle by the sheer force of faith. A man, whose confidence in God rises with every difficulty like the sea-gull on the wave; a man who sweeps along the most lethargic in his course, and by the power of his own momentum, draws others after him as an express train does the withered leaves that lie between the rails;—such a man is a grand man. Heaven works with him. Earth wonders at him. Hell dreads him. The disciples were not possessed yet of this all-conquering faith. They doubted, feared, and consequently failed. Perhaps the very appearance of the lad, and the more than usual ferocity of the fiend, staggered them. They only *hoped* he would come out when commanded. They took into account probable failure, and that paralyzed their power. Any way, their faith fell short, and rendered them unable to cope with the difficulty. They lacked just one thing, and that was— not discipleship, not position, not propriety, but **POWER**. That power was lacking through want of faith. That faith was lacking through want of prayer and fasting.

Fellow-workers for Jesus, hear this word: We must have faith in our work if it is to result in anything more than miserable failure. We may be active even to restlessness, and enthusiastic even to fanaticism; but if we lack faith our activity will be useless, and our enthusiasm worthless. Devils fear faith, nothing else. We must believe in the power of our God to cast out any and every unclean spirit. Never look upon any sinner as too far gone a case for sovereign mercy, and never preach or teach the truth as a kind of "forlorn hope." Believe in the power of God to change the most raging lion into the gentlest of lambs, and go to work under the inspiration of that belief. Believe in the actual presence of your Lord, and speak as one who sees him. I doubt not that this was one cause of the disciples' failure. They thought of him as absent, and often sighed, "O would that he was close at hand!" He was. But they knew it not. He who goes to God's work with the Lord no nearer to him than heaven's throne will never go with power. But *faith sees him* at its right hand, and goes into the battle side

by side with its Lord. It is he who fights in consciously divine company that fights best. We must believe also that results shall follow. The faith that wins the day is the faith that shouts "Victory" before the sword is drawn! This is the kind of faith Jehoshaphat had when he went to meet in battle the children of Ammon and Moab, and Mount Seir. The Lord had said to him, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord, for he will be with you." Well, what did the king do? He took God at his word, and never doubted the result. He placed in front of the army, not his most experienced swordsmen, or his most unerring archers, but his sweetest singers. They were not to intone a prayer, but chant a note of triumph, "Praise the Lord." The whole army files before the king and he gives them an inspiring word. What is it? Listen! "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." Thus the whole army went forth determined to believe down the enemy. Who wonders at the result? They were three days, not fighting the foe but gathering the spoil, and on the fourth day they rested in the valley of Berachah, which, being interpreted, is the valley of blessing.

As it was then, so is it now, and ever will be. They who go to God's work singing in the full confidence of victory shall always gather spoil, and rejoice in the valley of blessing. But how is this high kind of faith to be obtained? We purpose giving the answer to that question this evening, when we hope to preach on the more difficult text, "This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting." Suffice it to say, that extraordinary power, or power over extraordinary difficulties—the two are one and the same—can only be obtained by the use of extraordinary means. The ordinary, world-mixing Christian is incapable of any high service. He may do for sitting on committees, acting as secretary, or looking after the secular affairs of the Church; but bring him face to face with a possessed man and he is powerless. The highest style of work calls for the highest faith, and high faith is inseparable from a high life of communion. Had the disciples been spending their time like their

Master, in prayer and fasting, they had possessed the necessary power. They had not; therefore, they lacked it.

The secret of power with others is heart-elevation. Staying at Hastings a few months since I was much interested in watching the building of a breakwater just opposite my lodgings. It was done by driving massive piles of wood into the shingle. They were driven by a huge mass of metal being let fall upon them from a great height. True, the blows were not very quick one upon another, for it took some time to raise the weight to the necessary elevation; but when it did fall it accomplished something. Now suppose an on-looker had suggested that time was being wasted in hauling the herculean hammer up, and had offered to tap the iron-bound pile with a child's spade, saying, "He could give a hundred taps to the one blow," what would have been thought of his suggestion? It would have been laughed to scorn, and he would have been told that one of their blows would do more than a whole century of his tapping; that there was no waste of time in raising the iron thunderbolt, for the power of its blow was in proportion to the height from which it fell. So believer, your power and mine to affect men is in exact proportion to the elevation of our soul-life, and this elevation can only be obtained by secret communion with God, and abstinence from all that panders to the flesh and hinders the spirit's fellowship. Oh for a higher ambition to be made meet for the Master's use! A more intense longing for that secret power with God in private, that shall make us more than conquerors over hell in public! The Lord give us faith that shall overcome the unbelief of others, and clothe us with power to cast out devils, for his dear Name's sake! Amen.

JESUS CHRIST, THE HEALER OF THE BODY.

A SERMON.

BY THE REV. J. THAIN DAVIDSON.

Preached in Islington Presbyterian Church, London, April 20, 1873.

“Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.”—

Matthew viii. 17.

THE use which the Evangelist makes of this quotation from Isaiah is certainly not what we should expect. He has just related in succession a series of remarkable cures which our Lord had effected, specifying in particular a case of leprosy, another of paralysis, a third of fever, and a fourth of lunacy, all of which had at once yielded to His divine treatment; and then, summing up His day's blessed work in the words, “he healed all that were sick,” he finds in this a verification of the language of Isaiah, “Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.” The original words of the prophet are these, “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;” and unquestionably, as we find them in that wonderful 53rd chapter of Isaiah, which we have just been reading,—“the Gospel of the Old Testament,” as most of the early Christian fathers styled it,—their direct and primary reference is to spiritual and not to bodily disease. Indeed the Apostle Peter, who avails himself of the same quotation, applies it to the atonement and to that alone, seeing in it simply a prediction of the expiation of sin, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” Now, I am not going to raise any difficulty here, and to spend our time in discussing it. To me, it is quite sufficient that the inspired

Matthew, writing as truly under the dictation of God as Isaiah the prophet did, makes this application of the words, and states that even in regard to physical diseases Jesus Christ is a great and effectual Healer. We are warranted, therefore, in taking this view of the subject : and my aim in the present discourse is to set this one thought before you, and to illustrate, as God shall help me, the sweet truth, too much forgotten, that Jesus himself took our physical infirmities and bare our bodily sicknesses.

I am well aware, brethren, that this is the least important and the least valuable part of His redemptive work. To have the soul saved from sin is an infinitely greater deliverance than to have the body saved from sickness. When Christ effects a bodily cure, He merely blesses the tabernacle—the shell ; when He blesses the soul He saves the man. The body may receive benefit without the soul being blessed ; but such a benefit can only be brief and temporary, for there is no such thing as final health and salvation for the body where there is not the realized salvation of the soul. On the other hand, if the soul is saved, the body shares the blessing. It may have temporary ailments and sicknesses, but assuredly even now there will be manifold alleviations, and final and complete deliverance from all suffering. It shall blossom in immortal youth, in the land of which the inhabitant shall never say, “I am sick.” But so far as the present life is concerned, and it is of this that I speak now, a bodily cure may be granted without a spiritual blessing. Undoubtedly, when Jesus was upon the earth, He miraculously healed the bodies of some who never gave any evidence of having their souls healed or blessed : and there is no reason why He should not do so still. I believe He does so still. To have the soul cured, then, is an infinitely greater blessing than to have the body cured. Better, a thousand times, for the palsied man to hear Jesus say to him, “Man, thy sins be forgiven,” than to hear him say, “Arise, take up thy bed and walk.” And well did Jesus know

this, for in connection with the one statement He says, "Be of good cheer;" not so in connection with the other. Generally, men are more cheered by the prospect of physical recovery than of spiritual health. But Jesus knew that even a poor paralytic restored to health has still little reason for cheerfulness if his sins remain unforgiven,—if his soul is not yet saved; whilst a pardoned man, ay, though burdened with an incurable malady, may well be filled with joy. Better, surely, to hear that word which God spake through Nathan to David, "The Lord hath put away thy sin," than even to hear, "The Lord hath put away thy plague."

This is all true; and yet there is an important sense in which Jesus is the Saviour of the body: and the fact that scripture encourages us, when ourselves or our friends are laid prostrate with sickness, to pray for recovery, indicates that He through whom alone our prayer can be accepted and heard is not indifferent to our physical welfare.

Without further preface, let me endeavour to illustrate the text, and show how and in what sense it is true, as applying the words to the body, that "Jesus himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." I have often thought it a remarkable thing that, so far as can be gathered from the sacred narratives, *our Saviour was never personally sick*. I should be sorry to dogmatise or to speak decidedly on this point. We are told that He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." There are many passages in the Bible which might lead us to suppose that Christ must have suffered pain. Yet it is so exceedingly improbable that this could have occurred in His history,—that Christ could have been laid prostrate by sickness, without it ever being adverted to by any of the four evangelists, that we may regard it as an all but established fact that Jesus Christ was never sick. He knew what it was to be weary, to suffer hunger and thirst, and probably to be inconvenienced by extremes of heat and cold, but

there is no reason to believe that He was ever laid prostrate by fever, or stricken down by any of those specific diseases with which we are only too familiar. How are we to explain this? Was it because these maladies are closely connected with sin, from which He was totally free? Was it because His lifetime was so short, considering the work He had to accomplish in it, that every hour was needed for active and diligent service? I shall not attempt an explanation of the fact, if explanation is needed, but I advert to it only as making it still more necessary for us to enquire in what sense we are to understand the language of our text. As Christ did not bear sickness in the sense of taking them literally upon his own person, as He did our sins, in what sense did He, or does He, bear them? It is not enough to us that He deeply sympathises with us in our bodily suffering. We are not accustomed to speak of sympathy in language so strong as this, and although the thought of His true and genuine sympathy is a sweet and comforting one, it is perfectly clear that it does not exhaust the intended meaning of the passage. Indeed, as you must have noticed, when we were reading the passage, it is not of sympathy at all that the evangelist is speaking: he declares that Jesus did actually heal all the sick that were brought to him that day; and he sees in this fact the fulfilment of the prediction of Isaiah, which you and I have been accustomed to apply exclusively to the atonement for sin. Nor does it meet the case to say, as some have curiously observed, that Jesus bore the diseases of those whom he cured, in the sense of parting with vital energy of His own in the case of any cure He effected. We know it is stated, oftener than once, that virtue went out of Him, and that He was personally conscious that virtue went out of Him. There are indications too of something like an inward pang when He effected a cure, as where it is said, when He restored sight to a blind man, "He sighed." Jesus sighed as he touched the eye-balls and said, "Be

opened." Still it is but trifling with the subject to make this the interpretation of our text. I want, therefore, to show you how these words are to be understood: and in what remains of this sermon I shall run over, as rapidly as I can, the line of thought that presents itself to my mind on the subject.

And first, Jesus does directly hear prayer for the restoration of the sick. Notwithstanding all the insinuations recently made—insinuations, let me say, bordering upon the blasphemous, by men who have set their science in antagonism to religion—that all such prayers are useless, we do affirm, basing that affirmation upon the clear statement of scripture and upon personal experience, that Jesus does still hear the prayer of His people for the restoration of the sick. You are all acquainted with numerous instances of this in the lifetime of Jesus, when He was here on earth. You know how frequently He graciously yielded to the earnest and imploring requests of fathers and mothers and sisters for the recovery of those dear to them,—and why should He not do so still? No doubt the time of miracles, in the usual sense of the word, has gone by, but I believe that in all times up to the present day sick ones have been raised to health by Jesus, in answer to believing prayers. I have, myself, been eye-witness of one or two very remarkable instances, and there are many of you here who could rise up and testify that if you believe anything you believe that, in your own experience, or at least within your own observation, prayer has been heard in the restoration of the sick. When all human means have failed, when physicians gave up the case in despair, and even when the cold pallor of death had already seemed to be spread over the wasted form, the agonising prayer of faith has been heard, and the sinking one has been brought back, as it were, from the gates of the grave. Dear brethren, have you sickness in your family? go and tell Jesus of it. Oh! do not think it enough to acquaint the earthly physician. Go to

Him who is able to cure both body and soul. Oh ! do not let a rationalistic pseudo-intellectualism shake your confidence in the efficacy of such prayer : for scripture and experience agree in testifying that in this sense it is true, " Himself takes our infirmities and bears our sicknesses."

I remark, secondly, in illustration of the text, that Jesus affords much support and consolation to His people in the midst of their sickness. So true is this that I can sincerely and in all humility say, I should rather be lying utterly prostrate with fever, with pain in every joint and distress in every limb, but withal, with the sweet consciousness of my Saviour's presence, than I should be in robust and vigorous health, but an utter stranger to the love of Jesus. Ah ! how many there are who can declare that the season in which they were laid aside by illness was the sweetest season they ever enjoyed ! Willingly would they bear the same trial again if it should bring them the same sweet spiritual delight. Many a man never looked up to heaven and saw the glory that is there, until by sickness God laid him on his back. Yes, even death loses its terror in the charm of His presence. O ! how often has it been testified as the language of personal experience, that—

" Jesus can make a dying bed,
" Feel soft as downy pillows are ;
" While on His breast I lean my head,
" And breathe my life out sweetly there."

How soothing it is to the Christian in his suffering to realise that Jesus is fully acquainted with his affliction ! It is not a little consoling the thought that the medical attendant has a thorough insight into the facts, and knows what the patient must be suffering, knows perhaps better sometimes than any other ; but Jesus knows the dart of every pain, the shooting of every pang, the langour, the faintness, the weariness ; He knows it all, and the range of His sympathy is as wide as the range of His knowledge. Now, if the sympathy and nearness of the Living Saviour is so intensely comforting to

the sick believer, that he would rather choose the affliction with it than health without it—say, does not this yield another interpretation of the text, and show how true it is, even in regard to physical suffering, that Jesus “Himself takes our infirmities and bears our sicknesses.”

Thirdly, and advancing to a profounder view of the passage, I observe that *true religion is a great preventive of sickness and disease*. This subject branches out so widely, and admits of such varied illustration, that I must limit myself to a very general statement. We have several medical men in this congregation, and I rejoice in their presence amongst us. I am sure they will bear me out in what I am now to say as to the curative power of vital religion. There is no book of the New Testament which contains so many instances of Christ’s healing the bodies of men as the gospel according to Luke, and we are not surprised at this, for Luke being himself a physician, he would naturally take a special interest in those miracles of healing which were wrought by Christ. Well, the fact is patent to all, that the religion of Jesus is actually a preventive of disease. I undertake to say that there is no one here to-night who has not, in the circle of his own acquaintanceship, observed the early death of persons, who, had they been really Christians, would in all human likelihood have been living still. Many are now rotting in the dust, over whom we have deeply to lament that their own folly and ungodliness brought them to an untimely end. They became addicted to habits of sin and walked in forbidden paths, from which they would have been saved had they been the subjects of the gospel of Christ. Tens of thousands every year drop into the grave, who, had they only been Christians, would have lived long and useful lives. Who shall tell of the myriads, who, even in this City, have been immolated on the shrines of Venus and of Bacchus? The scripture says that “Wicked men shall not live out half their days,” that is, not half the time that they might have lived and

would have lived had they walked in the fear of God. A very large proportion of the disease at present existing in the world may be traced up to sinful habits, and multitudes who themselves are innocent of open vice have, all their days, in suffering and infirmity to pay the bitter penalty of crimes which others had committed. Aye ! and there are not a few now living—or rather dying while they live—whose present career, if continued, will certainly bring them to an early grave, and who would even now, in all probability, lengthen out their days, were they, at once joining themselves to Christ, to receive grace, to alter their course and cease the indulgence of their base desires. Talk in such cases of medical skill and medical advice ! The first thing they need for their health is the grace of God, and that grace is ready for them in Christ.

I observe, *fourthly*, that *the religion of Jesus is the great source of amelioration of human suffering*. Christ, when he was upon the Cross suffering those bitter pangs, was offered that which would modify his pain and ameliorate the agonies he was enduring, but He refused the amelioration, in order that He might purchase such for His people. Christianity teaches a proper regard for the sick, and develops, as nothing else develops, a practical sympathy towards the suffering. Yes, it has taught the duty of taking care of the body, and has so fostered and encouraged the healing art, that only in Christian lands, so far as I know, has medical skill risen to anything like perfection. We send our medical missionaries to heathen lands, and their professional knowledge and success are a wonder to the natives ; and even amongst a clever and intelligent people like the Chinese, there is scarcely known anything of pharmacy and surgery until our Christian practitioners instruct them in the art. What wonderful monuments of Christian sympathy for disease stand all around us in this city, in the hospitals and infirmaries and dispensaries that yearly bring relief to tens of thousands of our suffering fellow-creatures, and ex-

pend millions of money contributed by Christian charity ! Where do you read of any institutions of this character in ancient Rome, or Corinth, or Athens, or Babylon, with all their boasted culture and advancement and wealth ? or how is it that even at this day they have no existence in those cities of the world which the gospel of Jesus has not conquered ? How is it that epidemics, contagious diseases and plagues, are not now such destroying angels as in former years they were ? How is it that the grass is not growing in our streets, and silence reigning in our market-places ? How is that the dead-cart is not rolling over our thoroughfares with its tolling-bell, and and the voice heard that cries, "Bring out the dead" ? Is not the happier healthier condition of things due to the gospel ? And how is it that when there is fever in a district, or suffering, or destitution, numbers of persons band themselves together and visit the homes of the afflicted, climb up the dark stairs, plunge into the close cellars, sit by the bedside of the diseased, provide blankets to cover them, medicines to relieve them and food to nourish them ? Would all this have been the case had there been no Jesus on this earth ? Ah ! no. I should like you to tell me of a society of infidels that ever did the like. I should like to know what Atheism and Secularism have ever done for the amelioration of the woes of man. Therefore, you see, in this sense too, it is true that "Jesus has borne our infirmities and has carried our sicknesses."

I have just one more remark to make. Fifthly, *Jesus Christ is bringing all his own people to a land where sickness and suffering shall never be known.* The pencil of inspiration does not give us any very full picture of the bliss and happiness of heaven ; but it is worthy of notice that wherever this subject is touched upon there is a reference to heaven's complete immunity from disease. In ancient Palestine, as inhabited by the chosen Israel, there was in times of national piety a measure of healthfulness that was

quite unknown in the other countries of the earth. On condition of their faithfulness to Himself, God made an express promise to the Jewish nation : " I will put none of those diseases upon thee which I have put upon the Egyptians ;" and Canaan—healthful Canaan—was in this respect but a poor type of the heavenly world. There are words here and there in the ancient prophets that may be legitimately referred to the celestial land, as when Isaiah says, " The inhabitants thereof shall not say, I am sick ;" or Jeremiah, in God's name, " Behold, I will bring the city health and cure, and I will cure them and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace." But St. John expressly says, concerning the heavenly Jerusalem, in words that have been a balm and a solace to generations of suffering saints, whose hopes amidst their trials here were fastened on that better shore, " And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, *neither shall there be any more pain*, for the former things have passed away." We read, in the 22nd chapter of Revelation, at the 2nd verse, concerning the tree of life, that, " The leaves thereof are for the healing of the nations," but that rendering in our English version is a very unhappy one. It ought to be read thus—if indeed it can be expressed properly at all in our language—" The leaves of the tree are for the health-sustaining of the nations ;" seeming to say, " There shall be no need of healing, for the health of the people shall be sustained by leaves of this wondrous tree, which is for the health-sustaining of the nations." That body, which at death is sown in corruption, shall at the resurrection arise in incorruption. Buried a natural body it shall arise a spiritual body. It shall be no more subject to infirmity or disease, no more inconvenienced by weariness, or heat, or cold, or hunger, or thirst. Do you want scripture for this ? " They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." And observe that all this due to Jesus, for it is the " Lamb

which is in the midst of the throne," that has procured this blessedness and everlasting joy and health ; so that here, once more, the words of the prophet receive their confirmation, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."

Behold, then, in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the apostle describes him, the Saviour of the *body* ! He is the divine healer, as well of physical as of spiritual disease. Let sanitarians, physicians, humanitarians, philanthropists, and all who seek to promote the physical well-being of man, remember this : All combined will effect little good without Christ. The religion of Jesus teaches and instils, as nothing else does, cleanliness and order, economy and temperance ; it undermines old rooted superstitions, and conquers vice ; it elevates the tastes and subdues the passions ; it sweetens the breath of society, and renovates the whole face of the community. Ah ! if you want, even as to this world, to be healthful and happy, peaceful and prosperous, yield yourselves up entirely to the influence of the religion of Jesus, for of it it is declared : "It shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones."

But I dare not dismiss this congregation without pointing you, in a single word, as I close, to *Jesus as the healer of the soul*. Ah, it is a spiritual cure that most of you are in need of to-night, and the Great Physician waits to undertake your case, however sad and desperate it seems. The apostle Peter, you remember, quoting from Isaiah the very same words, which, as rendered by Matthew, have formed our text to-night,—the apostle Peter gives to these words a purely *spiritual* application, and reads only the glorious truth that Christ, "His own self, bare our sins in his own body." Oh ! how sweetly emphatic is this precious declaration : He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body. Then why, sinner, should you or I bear them at all ? If it is so expressly stated that Jesus, His own self, has in His own body borne them, why should you or I still bear the

burden? Alexander the Great was once ill of a very dangerous malady, which defied the skill of all his physicians. One night he dreamed, we are told, that some one brought him a peculiar looking plant which was an effectual remedy for such a malady as his. In the morning he minutely described it as he had seen it in his dream, and immediately it was sought for by his attendants, and found, and the result was his complete recovery. Thank God! He has pointed us, dying sinners, to that plant of which the prophet speaks in this chapter as so much "despised and rejected by man," a tender plant, a root out of a dry ground, which has wondrous and never-failing properties of healing. The balm of Gilead is ever effectual. You know they used to wound the balsam-tree in order to obtain from it the healing essence, and in like manner we are reminded by the prophet, that Christ, this tender plant, from which the balm exudes, was "wounded for our transgressions" and that "by His stripes we are healed." Oh! then let the earnest cry go up to Him now from every unsaved soul here, "Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee."

"Dear Lord, with hopes and fears we come,

"To touch Thee if we may;

"Oh! send us not despairing home,

"Send none unhealed away!"

THE DEVIL'S VICTIM MADE CHRIST'S WITNESS.

A SERMON.

BY THE REV. JAMES YEAMES.

Preached at Harrogate, on Sunday Afternoon, May 25th, 1873.

“And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind.”
—Mark v. 15.

THE Saviour had just come from a triumphant assertion of His dominion over the powers of nature. Amid the howlings of the tempest upon the Galilean lake his voice had been heard, saying, “Peace, be still,” and bellowing winds and boisterous waves had recognized the authority of their Creator and King, and had sunk into silent submission to His word. Now He advances to a conflict with the hosts of hell. As his dominion over material forces has been evidenced, so must His sovereignty over spiritual powers be demonstrated.

At his landing a legion of demons stand marshalled to oppose His entrance into a region that has long lain in bondage under the undisputed sway of the Prince of Darkness.

It would seem as if, in this Gadara, Satan had fixed his seat, and held the people in willing bonds. But Jesus invades this imperial fortress of sin, and gloriously displays, even here, His willingness and power to deliver them that are bound, and to break the rod of the oppressor.

The existence of demoniacal possession in the days of our Saviour has been the subject of much inquiry. The question has been frequently asked: How was it that there were then these manifestations of the devil's power, such as we have no record of before or since? The answer may be: That the time of our Lord's incarnation and life upon earth was a period of peculiar activity in the spirit world. The residence of the Son of God in human form upon earth brought visits of angels, such as have not since been visibly welcomed by men.

Satan, too, may have sought and obtained a liberty to exert his power in a special manner. The long-promised Saviour had entered upon His work. The atonement for sin was now ready to be offered, and the great redeeming work would soon be an accomplished fact. Is it surprising that hell should have put forth its utmost might of malice to oppose the omnipotent mercy of Heaven? The Second Adam has taken the field, and stands face to face with the foe of man and God. The adversary dared even to tempt the Saviour, and, had it been possible, would have subverted the scheme of human redemption by seducing the Redeemer. But, in that contest, the tempter was vanquished, and Jesus was left master of the field, to be succoured and adored by angels. Hell quitted the scene of its defeat, and heaven's hosts swept down to minister unto and hail the victor.

And in the case of those possessed with devils, may it not be that there was an attempt on the part of Satan to resist the royal supremacy of the Redeemer? And was there not the glorious demonstration of the fact that Jesus was "mighty to save,"—as able in power as affluent in love? "He casts out devils by His word; He is Redeemer, by kingly might and authority as well as by priestly sacrifice."

No matter how terrible the hold which Satan has gotten upon the human race, or upon any of its members, here is *One* stronger than the "strong man armed." The Spirit of the Lord God is upon him, and he has come to snap the fetters of the slave, and to break his thralldom; "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Have we not, moreover, in these triumphs over Satan, and the forcible rescue of his captives, a significant indication of that final victory which Christ is to achieve over hell and its hosts? Here we may behold Satan falling, "as lightning from heaven;" here we may see the signal confirmation of the prophecy of the Redeemer's ultimate universal rule, the earnest of that perfected triumph when He shall "finally beat down Satan" under our feet.

Sweet is the promise which this narrative of victory over Satan, and the release of his captive, has for every sinner. No matter how heavy thy chain or how deep thy subjection; no matter how long the years of thy servitude, or how terrible the tyranny under which thou dost groan,—Sinner,

wounded, bruised and faint, there is release for thee, there is healing, and peace, and liberty in Jesus.

I. First, then, let us notice, THE DEVIL IN POSSESSION. How terrible is the picture upon which we are called to gaze! Here is a man who is the bond-slave of hell, both in body and in soul. He is not merely misled and deluded by the artifices of the enemy, but his whole being has come under the positive possession and control of the devil. His body, designed to be "the temple of indwelling God," has become the foul abode of demons. Upon the throne of his will an usurping tyrant sits. His memory is filled with painful, shameful records; the chambers of his imagination are crowded with pictures hideous and obscene. The miserable prey of unrestrained passions—exiled from home and all its sweet influences and loving endearments—he roams in wild frenzy on the bare mountain side. Madness fires his eye and distorts his visage; his naked body, gashed with many a bloody wound, bears witness to self-inflicted tortures; while at his heels clank the broken links of fetters with which men have sought to bind him. Despairing, yet defiant; alone, yet haunted by a legion; consumed by inward fires, and worn and wasted by exposure and hardship; day and night his piteous wail is heard, as he restlessly wanders amid the rocks or on the shore. Behold him—a picture of what fallen man may become when under the full power of the devil, and a terrible indication of what sinners will suffer when, removed from the benign protection of the Divine grace they despise, they shall be delivered to the tormentors and cast into the outer darkness.

1. How *powerful* was the tyranny of the devil over his victim. A "legion" held this garrison, and swarmed through all the avenues of this citadel. There was no recess of the soul into which their cruel and hateful presence was not intruded.

When a Roman legion marched to battle, six thousand swords flashed in air; the ground thrilled with the tramp of six thousand armed men, the cry of assault or victory rang from six thousand tongues. "And he answered, saying, my name is Legion: for we are many."

A complete, pervading possession held in its foul grasp all the faculties of this soul, all the powers of this body. The image and superscription of the King upon the man had

given place to the brand of the despot usurper. Alas ! and can man fall so low ? Is this the ripened fruitage of sin ; this the deep debasement of its development ? Brethren, as low as this might we have been to-day, but for the love of God and the compassion of Christ. Aye, and into deeper degradation shall we sink, and in everlasting subjection to such dread tyranny shall we be held, unless Christ be—for each, for all—Liberator and Redeemer.

We have, perhaps, seen the ruins of an ancient temple, whose very relics are so exquisitely beautiful that we are filled with admiration, and led to ask : What was the edifice in its glory if such be its beauty in decay ?

There was a time when every vacant casement was filled with delicate tracery, and “storied windows richly dight.” Where we now tread the rank grass the feet of worshippers paced the tessellated floor. The stained and moss-grown walls were bright with portraiture of angel-faces and forms of saints. Within the hollow walls, that now ring with the night-owl’s shriek, arose the harmonious song of praise. But how great is the change ! The vaulted ceiling is fallen, and the clustered pillars are broken and laid low. Desolation and decay hold undisputed rule. The birds of night make here their nesting-place, the nettle and brier grow in the sanctuary, the lizard’s slimy track is seen on the shattered marble of the altar, and nameless things of uncleanness creep and hide among the fallen columns.

And yet this is a feeble image of the dire change that takes place when the soul of man becomes the dwelling-place of demons. Darkness broods where the shekinah of God’s Presence should shine ; the harsh voices of discord and passion prevail where the music of joy and praise should arise. The heart’s altar lies cold and dark, or burns with the strange fires of Belial-worship. The forms of sanctity and presentments of holiness have been dragged from their shrines, and in every vacant niche a foul demon sits,—anger, self-will, lust, and pride usurping the places of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith. We see man, designed to be the temple of indwelling God, degraded, dark and desolate ; his body the temple of sin, his soul the throne of the Prince of Darkness.

2. The power thus exercised over the victim of the devil was *malicious* in its operation.

The enemy of man has always endeavoured to represent himself a friend. At his first approach he insinuated that he was more benevolent than the Divine Being, who had forbidden the "tree of knowledge" to Adam and Eve. He suggested that gain was to be made and liberty enjoyed by obedience to his directions, and declared, moreover, that the command of God might be transgressed with impunity.

So, ever, has he lyingly and artfully induced men to believe that in following his bidding they were advancing to happiness ; so has he ever deceived man and dishonoured God by the falsehood, "Ye shall not surely die."

Brethren, "Be not deceived ; God is not mocked." "Death hath passed upon all men," notwithstanding the plausible lie of the devil to our first parents. All who have followed the Evil One's leading have discovered that it led them from Eden into a wilderness, where thorns have pierced their feet and briars have torn their flesh. However the devil may vary his guise he cannot change his nature. Clad in angel's robes of light he is a devil still. He may assume the mask of benevolence, but hideous malice scowls beneath. He never yet sought man's good, he is incapable of doing so ; and when his promises have been fairest, his purposes have been most cruel. And where men have not reaped the full and bitter harvest of sin, it has been, not through the devil's good-will, but through God's mercy. See, when he has the opportunity, and this poor wretch falls under his power, how he reveals his true character, revels in cruelties of tyranny and gloats over his hapless prey ! And the fair-spoken, well-favoured devil of sin, whom the sinner to-day harbours as guest in his heart, would do the like by him, and will unless he be dispossessed.

Look at the man again. Frenzy fires his eye and maddens his brain. How worn his face, how attenuated his frame ! See where his wrists have been chafed by the cords, and his ancles fretted by the fetters. What paroxysms of agony shake his body and cause him to wail forth his woe and anguish. He lacerates his flesh with sharp stones ; his feet are bruised and bleeding, for he is never at rest. "Always, night and day," "driven of the devil," (Luke viii. 29)—"he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones." His naked body is exposed

to the beating of the storm and the scorching of the sun, for "he wore no clothes." His shriek of suffering and terror is heard with a shudder by the fisher in his boat, as night goes down on the lake of Galilee, and fills with alarm the passing traveller along the shore, for "he was exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way" (Matthew viii. 28).

How cruel then is the demon-power that holds this man in its grasp! It has dragged him from home and driven him into the wilderness; it fills his spirit with horror and afflicts his body with pain and torture. It has stripped and maddened him, and made him a solitary wanderer on the mountain side. It has torn him from the abodes of love and the amenities of social life, and has made him a dweller among the tombs,—cowering in the shade of the sepulchre and companion of the ghastly dead. This is what the devil has done for his votary and victim.

And we challenge you, brethren. Did you ever give place to the devil without finding you had surrendered yourself to a tyrant? If with the one hand the tempter has presented the attractive boon, has not the other held concealed a whip of scorpions? Has not sin ever brought its inevitable entail of remorse? When pleasure has filled "her tempting beaker up," has not a serpent lurked in its glowing depths? Look within you and around you; see how the devil repays his servants. Whence the remorse, the shame, the fear, by which human hearts are wrung? Whence the mental sorrows and physical sufferings of the "gay" servants of sin? How many, to-day, are "cutting and wounding" themselves,—like the prodigal in the far country, wasting their substance in a "self-destroying life." Estranged from home and far from God, wandering in constant unrest and dissatisfaction in the wilderness of sin; dwelling in darkness and among the dead; "sowing to the flesh" and of the flesh reaping "corruption,"—in how many instances is the picture before us reproduced!

3. The power possessing this unhappy man is described as *unclean* and *unconquerable*.

It is neither unreasonable nor uncharitable to suppose that in some sense this man had brought upon himself this foul enslavement. Had he been a servant of God, the

enemy would never have been permitted to gain such an ascendancy over him. The devil could not touch Job's property, much less his person, without divine permission. And when allowed to afflict his body he was commanded to "save his life." "The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous." The Most High assuredly would never quit his human temple to "give place unto the devil." It was when Saul sold himself to work disobedience that the Spirit of the Lord departed from him and the evil spirit troubled him (1 Samuel xvi. 14). It was when Jerusalem had rejected and crucified the Lord Christ that the glory departed from city and temple, and the "abomination of desolation" stood in the holy place. But the term "unclean spirit" significantly suggests the course of life by which this unhappy man had brought himself under the fell power of the demon.

By a reckless career of sensual indulgence and profligate folly, by a prodigal surrender of himself and the powers of his nature to courses of evil and the service of lust, the man's physical nature may have become so impaired and emasculated, his moral powers so paralyzed, his intellectual energies so enfeebled, that he had fallen an easy, helpless prey into the hands of the enemy. And now the polluting grasp of the "unclean spirit" is upon all his faculties, and his whole nature is steeped in the filthiness of sin.

This *unclean spirit* proved itself also *unconquerable*. None could bind, none could tame. The appeals of love, the entreaties of affection, were as powerless as cords and fetters; force could not subdue, endearments could not soften. Is it not so still with the demon of sin in the human heart? No man can bind, neither can any man tame him. Parental solicitude and love are powerless to renew or subdue the depraved heart, or to bind the perverse will. Neither chastisement nor compulsion, the rod nor restraint, can change into love the native enmity of the carnal mind. Even where the law secures and punishes transgressors it possesses no power to exorcise the demon within them. We thrust our criminals into the dungeon, and take away their power of injuring the community, but we have neither bound nor tamed the evil spirit. Let loose upon society the thief would prove himself dishonest still, the ruffian be brutal still. Human agency, whether tender or terrible, persuasive

or imperative, cannot effect the regeneration of a single soul. Christ must come into Gadara before devils are cast out. Blessed be God, when He comes even the legions of hell shall be dispersed at his word ! All our hope for humanity is in Christ. Every means for the improvement of man, socially and morally, is effectual in so far as it brings Christ to men or men to Christ. Honoured was the ship and happy the mariners who carried Jesus to the Gadarene shore, but they had voyaged in vain had not Christ been in the vessel.

But we turn from the saddening yet instructive picture of humanity held in possession by the power of the devil, to notice, secondly :

II. THE DEVIL EJECTED.

An impulse of desire, or a presentiment that help is at hand, hurries the demoniac to the feet of Jesus. It may be that the very vision of the Saviour as he stepped from the ship kindled hope in the poor man's heart. He prostrates himself at the Redeemer's feet and worships him. He utters no appeal, but there is the eloquence of entreaty in his attitude and appearance. Such a suit cannot be presented to Jesus in vain. Love, pity, indignation, speak in the Saviour's utterance : "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit !"

But the victim of the devil is just where his despotic possessor would least of all have him be,—prostrate at Christ's feet and in personal contact with Jesus. A fresh paroxysm seizes the man, as the evil spirit within seeks to retain his hold, and dares insolently to expostulate with the Redeemer. But the words of the demon only bring new tribute to the Saviour's honour. In Jesus devils recognise their king. "Torment us not," is the cry that reveals their sense of His power, and their apprehensive expectations of the "time" when they shall be plunged into "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In vain their pleas and parleying. The mandate of authority goes forth, "Come out of the man," and they must obey. O, glorious Saviour ! He casts out devils "with his word." He is "mighty to save," the "King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Behold this marvellous display of infinite pity and Almighty power. Who art thou that groanest in the bitterness of thy

bondage? Look up, and leap into liberty, for Christ is here! Is thy heart encased in bands of steel, thy spirit weighted with unnumbered chains? Has the tyrannous thrall of passion, or sloth, or avarice, or pride taken hold upon thy soul? Art thou the bond-slave of the devil, "led captive at his will," and hurrying to the eternal prison? Be of good cheer, for Christ is here! To-day, as of old, the dead are raised, the lepers are cleansed, and devils cast out at His word. Still may we sing—

"JESUS, the Name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly!"

Whenever a sense of need or a view of Christ prompts men to fall at His feet, the devil will strive to interpose between the sinner and the Saviour. Hence the haltings and indecision of many, who, enlightened and awakened as to their sin and danger, nevertheless hold back from Jesus. O, let there be no leaguings with the devil to keep thy soul from Christ. If thou wilt thou mayest be free. The tight grasp of the tyrant may be upon thee, but it shall relax at His word. There is no doubt as to who shall be victor if thou are willing. Jesus, who hath bought thee, will rescue His own. Be not afraid of the issue; Christ shall be conqueror if thou wilt suffer Him to save thee.

We now come to an incident in this narrative which has awakened considerable inquiry and criticism. There has been a doubt with some as to the justice of the Saviour's action in allowing the devil to enter the herd of swine. But we cannot see the need of any attempt to explain or defend the acts of Him by whom all things were made and by whom all things consist. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" If these swine had been swept into the depths by some sudden and stormy overflow of the lake, if the lightnings of heaven had blasted them, if the earth had opened her mouth and engulfed them, who would have dared to say aught against God?

It may be, however, that the request of the devils to enter into the swine was prompted by a malicious cunning. They were not unfamiliar with the character of the Gadarenes, and perhaps calculated upon the result which followed, and

sought by the destruction of their property to prejudice the people against Christ.

Turn we now to the third phase of the picture.

III. THE DEVIL'S VICTIM BECOMES CHRIST'S WITNESS.

The tidings of the wondrous miracle were soon spread through all the country. "And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind." What a picture of peace and repose! He, who night and day ranged the mountain side, whose spirit knew no rest, *sits* at the feet of Jesus. A blessed calm has fallen upon the soul, erewhile raging with contending passions. No more savage and shameless, the man *sits clothed* at the feet of Jesus. His frenzy is gone, for he is now "in his right mind." The eye that glared with fury beams with the soft light of love. The face that was disfigured by passion is composed and calm. He who plucked asunder chains and broke in pieces fetters, sits humble, docile, happy, at his Deliverer's side. When the people of the country saw this sight and heard the story, they were *afraid*, "and they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts." How strange and awful this request! In the face of this glorious miracle of mercy, standing beholding the results of the Saviour's beneficent presence and work among them, they pray him to quit their shores.

Of what was it they were afraid? Surely, the thought that Christ might perform other wonders of benevolence did not alarm them? Why "afraid"? Alas, for poor selfish, sordid human nature! They were afraid that other miracles might be wrought *at their expense*. For it is not a reverent awe that fills their breasts, but a mean and selfish fear. It is not so much what has been told them "how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil" that troubles them, but that which they hear "concerning the swine." They love their herds of swine more than they love their fellow-man, or desire the presence of the Saviour. They dare not command Him to withdraw, but they pray Him to depart. *And He takes them at their word.*

As we stand amazed and indignant at their sin and folly, do we imagine that such rejection of the Redeemer has never been repeated? Alas, how often is it the case that in their greed for gain, their consuming ambition, their love of

sin, men cannot suffer the presence of the Saviour, and by their whole attitude and behaviour entreat Him to depart. Are there not those here to-day whose long-continued indecision and persistent defiance bear witness to the truth? O, brethren, remember that Christ sometimes takes men at their word, and fatally answers their mad and wicked prayer.

And are there none in this day who imitate the example here recorded, in setting a higher value on their selfish interests than on the souls of their fellow-men? Are there not some who would rather part with the Saviour's presence than with their property or sources of gain? Alas, the race of the Gadarenes is not yet extinct! Witness the inducements presented by railway directors, to lead men to profane the Sabbath and to forsake the sanctuary. The premium of a cheap excursion offered to tempt men to dishonour God and risk their souls' salvation! See where a hundred and fifty thousand drink-shops display their temptations, multiplying attractions, in order that the young, the weak, and the unwary may be allured, and the traders' coffers filled. The yawning grave may swallow up its fifty thousand yearly—"slain by drink;" the workhouse and the prison may be crowded with drink-impooverished and drink-degraded inmates; an army of six hundred thousand drunkards may exist among us,—continually decimated, yet as continually recruited,—what reck it all, if manufacturers and vendors grow rich thereby? And are not those who provide literature and amusements, calculated to debase and debauch youthful minds, and, in short, all who make profit by ministering to vice, true descendants of the Gadarenes, who were "afraid" of Christ's presence? Men who think more of the miserable sixpence they gain than of the immortal soul they imperil; men who drag Paul and Silas to the scourge, the prison, and the stocks, because by their means a spirit of divination is exorcised from the poor maiden of whom they are masters, and so "the hope of their gains" is gone; men who riot when Paul preaches at Ephesus, because their "craft is in danger." Brethren, let us not be found among such; but, for ourselves, for our countrymen, let us plead with Christ that he will stay on these our shores, and multiply among us his miracles of matchless grace.

Let us now turn to the other prayer which was presented to the Saviour. And whereas he granted the people's prayer to their own hurt, he refuses his servant's petition. "And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him." One soul at least on this inhospitable coast cannot bear to part with Jesus. He who, delivered from the demon power, owed all his new found liberty and joy to Christ, clings to the Saviour. The object of much love, the recipient of special and inestimable benefactions, he loves much in return.

But the Saviour has taken his place in the ship, and the mariners are grasping their oars and spreading the sail. The man's soul leaps to his lips in one urgent entreaty that he may be allowed to go with Jesus, never, never more to quit His side. So the new-born soul, in its first impulse of love and joy, is ready to wish that it could take wings at once to heaven's gate, and speed to its Saviour's presence. But the Master has work for his servants before He calls them to rest. They are to be His representatives and witnesses in a world that would bid Him depart from its coasts.

"Go home to thy friends, and tell how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." "Go home" to "thine own." Here is the first duty of the Christian worker, and his first field of service. Let "thine own" see and hear what the Lord hath done for thee; tell them of His Divine compassion; and where thine influence is most constantly and powerfully exerted, there let it be a sanctified energy to win others to Christ. Is not this the natural as well as the most effective order of Christian work? Perhaps one reason why the growth of Christianity has been retarded, is to be found in the neglect of this "Home Missionary" work by Christ's servants? Thy husband, thy brother, thy child,—let these be the first objects of thy Christian love and zealous effort. Show them "how great things the Lord hath done for thee." Without ostentation, without self-assertion, let the change be so marked, the moral miracle wrought in thee so manifest, that those who know thee best shall most clearly see and most powerfully feel the reality of thy religion.

Not only do we see here the *order* but also the *mode* of Christian witness. First, a practical presentation of religion

in personal piety, and then the publication of the Lord's infinite compassion. The man is himself both an example of the effects of Christ's gospel and a witness of the Lord's unbounded mercy. Lips and life give concordant evidence, and the heart and tongue of the man are united in the testimony. So Christ's witness "departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him : and all men did marvel." Surely we may hope that in some amazement grew into admiration, and wonder into love.

Brethren, it was not chance that so piloted the bark in which Jesus voyaged that its prow touched the shore just where the afflicted man made his dwelling among the tombs. It was mercy, potent and free, that brought the Saviour and the sinner together, and gave to the legion-haunted soul a "day of grace."

Divine mercy, infinite and free, it is which has directed the bark of mercy across a "great gulf fixed" to these earthly shores. And divine love it is which brings the bark of mercy to our coasts to-day, and favours us with the presence of Him who is "mighty to save." Christ, the Healer and Deliverer, is *here* ! Whosoever will, may come and be made whole.

But if we are to be saved it must be by our own consent. The Saviour will not stay in face of our entreaties that He should depart. He who overcame the tempestuous sea and raging demons, was resisted by the perverse will of men. He will not coerce into submission, he will not force an entrance into the heart. O, will you not be willing "in the day of His power."

From the shores of Gadara the bark that bore the Saviour of the world sailed away. Did no regret or misgiving arise in the breasts of the ungrateful and infatuated people who had driven the Christ from their coasts ? *But it was too late.* He had called, and they had refused ; He had stretched out His hands, and no man had regarded. Too late, too late ! The ship is now but a mere speck on the horizon, and the Saviour whom it carries goes from a gainsaying and rebellious people to be "received gladly" by those who are "waiting for him."

Brethren, while the bark of mercy lies drawn up upon your shores, while the saving presence and healing power of

Jesus are among you, submit to Christ as Lord, and accept Him as your Saviour. Suffer not the Saviour to depart, and leave you Christless, hopeless and undone! Be not among those who through a long eternity shall regretfully wail, "Too late, too late!" Be not among those who at the last shall wander crying, and grievously tormented, upon a dark and desolate shore, looking in vain for the bark of mercy to visit their coasts.

O let it be with us as with those to whom the Saviour turned when Gadara spurned Him from Her coasts,—
"THE PEOPLE GLADLY RECEIVED HIM: *for they were all waiting for Him.*" (Luke viii. 40.)



JESU, if still Thou art to-day
As yesterday the same,
Present to heal, in me display
The virtue of Thy Name.

Cast out Thy foes and let them still
To Jesu's name submit ;
Clothe with Thy righteousness, and heal,
And place me at Thy feet.

I know in Thee all fulness dwells,
And all for wretched man ;
Fill every want my spirit feels,
And break off every chain !

THE PERSIAN KING.

A SERMON.

BY ARTHUR PENHRYN STANLEY, D.D.,

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER.

*Read in Westminster Abbey, June 22nd, 1873, before the Westminster
Volunteers.*

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and threescore and twenty provinces :) "That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the city; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him: Esther arose and stood before the king, and said, How can I endure to see the destruction of my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"—Esther, i: 1, 2, 3; viii. 4, 5, 6.

THE chosen these verses from one of the sacred books, during the week on which we are entering, the third of June, is appointed to be read in the services of the Church. In the text thus formed are two ideas, not unconnected with each other, and both suitable to the occasion which I have to speak. The first verses express the condition of the world on which the course of events in the Book of Esther was enacted. The latter verses express the burst of free patriotic spirit which gives to this text its peculiar pathos and interest.

(I.) First, let us observe the outward stage of these events.

It is a curious coincidence, certainly not thought of by those who five years ago fixed the new Calendar of Lessons, that the portions of Scripture appointed to be read from the Old Testament in the daily services should, from the 18th of June, onwards for twelve days, be almost entirely occupied with the relations of the chosen people to that ancient Asiatic kingdom, of which the chief representative has, for the first time, set foot on our shores. In the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Persian court forms, as it were, the background of all the transactions of the history. Long letters and addresses to and from the kings of Persia are incorporated into those sacred books.* Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes,† figure as the deliverers and protectors of the returning Israelites. The names of the Persian satraps, the officers of the Persian empire, the chancellor, the scribe, the keeper of the king's forest, the cupbearer,‡ occupy the places which, in the earlier books of the Bible, have been filled by the princes and elders of the house of Judah. And when we come, as we shall at the close of this week, to the Book of Esther, we are transplanted still more directly into the heart of those distant Asiatic regions. There the whole scene is laid, not in Jerusalem, but in Shushan or Susa, the capital of Persia. There we are invited to gaze on all the splendour of the Palace of Shushan, even down to the details of furniture; § "its white and green and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the couches of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble." There we see Ahasuerus, "the great king," as he was called by the Greeks—the same || it is believed, as that famous

* Ezra iv. 11-23. † Ezra, v. 13; vi. 3; 7. 1.

‡ Ezra, iv. 8, 9, 23; vi. 13; Nehemiah ii. 1-8. § Esther i. 6.

|| See Milman's *History of the Jews*, i. 428; Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*—*Ahasuerus*.

Xerxes, who made the memorable expedition into Greece two thousand years ago, and since whose time till the present year no ruler of Persia has ever crossed from Asia into Europe. Round him we see the seven* counsellors, successors of the seven conspirators who placed that ancient dynasty on the throne; and in the strange details of the Book of Esther we are admitted to the wild and terrible incidents which from that day to this have marked the interior of Oriental courts.

I have dwelt upon the outward form and circumstances of these sacred books, partly because it is interesting to trace in them the first beginnings of that historic empire, which, through so many vicissitudes of religion, race and dynasty, still continues, and is at this moment in the mouths of all; but also because it illustrates a principle always important, and which the events of this week may serve to bring before us. The Kings of Persia in ancient times were not Israelites but heathens, even as the Kings of Persia of the present time are not Christians but Mussulmans. The empire of Persia then, as the empire of Persia now, was, as the Book of Esther sufficiently teaches us, guided by rules of thought, action and manners quite unlike those of western nations, in which, by God's providence, the onward course of civilization and religion has been appointed to march. But nevertheless these Gentile monarchs, this Asiatic kingdom, are made to occupy this prominent place in the Bible in order to remind us that beyond the limits of the chosen people, beyond the limits of Jewry or of Christendom, there are kingdoms and races of men who claim, as well as we, a share in the compassion and justice of the All Merciful, All Holy God. It is always good, as the German proverb says, to be reminded that even beyond the mountains and beyond the seas there are living people to be found; human beings, who sway the destinies of their fellow-men; fellow-creatures, who with us

* Esther i. 12.

have immortal spirits, and who under other forms worship, or attempt to worship, the same Universal Father. In the visions of the prophet Daniel there was seen a guardian genius or angel of Persia,* and the kingdom was divided to Persia by a divine decree.† In the bold language of the Evangelical Prophet, Cyrus is described as the anointed of the Lord, as Saul and David had been in the Psalms and in the books of Samuel. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus: he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure." ‡ Even Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the story of Esther, wild and reckless as he was, was the instrument of saving the Israelites from an almost total destruction. It was good for the Jewish people to have had their horizon thus enlarged; to have learned in the schools of Persia truths which they had but dimly known before; to have seen that Cyrus and Ahasuerus, though with their own peculiar forms, worshipped the true Invisible Almighty Ruler of all things. The unity of God was fixed in their hearts with a still deeper impress, when they felt in this contact with the Persian religion that it was the belief, not only of their own small nation, but of that mighty empire which seemed to them the highest form of earthly grandeur.

It is, in another sense, good for us to have brought before our minds that England, and even Europe, is not the whole world; that there are vast nations far away—whose fortunes for good or evil are linked with our distant dominions—on whose character we may exercise a beneficent influence; from whose presence we may feel that our responsibilities are not limited to our own island. The times, no doubt, have greatly changed since the last King of Persia trod on European soil; since the Prince whom the Greeks called Xerxes, and the Book of Esther called Ahasuerus, struck terror into the rising commonwealths of Greece, as he

* Daniel v. 13. † Daniel v. 28.

‡ Isaiah xlv. 28; xlv. 1.

came with his mighty armies, which devoured cities and drank up rivers.

“ A king sate on the rocky brow
That looks o’er sea-born Salamis,
And ships by thousands lay below,
And men in nations—all were his.
He counted them at break of day,
And when the sun set—where were they ? ”

Yes: Thermopylæ and Salamis have done their work. From that hour the power of the great Asiatic kingdoms ceased to overawe the course of European civilisation. That small continent, those scattered isles of the west,—which, to the early nations of the East seemed lost in the evening shades of the setting sun (the probable origin of the name of Europe, *Ereb*,* the land of the evening), has become the land of sunrise, in a yet higher sense than was the old “Oriental” world of “the Levant.” “Westward the star of empire takes its course.” And the Gentiles of the far East are drawn to the light of Christendom, which is the light of Europe, and the brightness of that rising which, as the ages roll on, lightens ever more and more into the perfect day.

But in the very fact of this great change there is occasion not only for thankfulness, but for awe, for meditation, for the humble and serious sense of our own vast responsibilities. In the presence of the ghosts of those giant empires dead and gone, and of the living representatives of their descendants—we have to play our part on the stage allotted to us. On that stage, small though it be in space, yet central between the old world and the new—giving back to the East the light which we received from it—cherishing the recollections of that old primeval cradle of our race and of our faith,—it is for us to quit ourselves like men, like Englishmen, like Christians,—if we would not forfeit the prize of our high calling, if we wish not merely to render a passing

* I owe this etymology to the lamented Emanuel Deutsch.

hospitality, but a lasting benefit to the guests whom we delight to honour.

II. And this brings me to the second part of my text, which specially applies to the occasion that has called a large part of this congregation together. What is it that gives to the Book of Esther its enduring spiritual value? What is it that lights up, as with a ray from heaven, that dark background of Oriental despotism, which fills the larger part of its pages? It is the noble patriotic spirit of the Jewish race in the presence of the Gentiles amongst whom they sojourned ; that passionate love of country and home, that generous pride in the independence of their race and creed which enkindled the song of Deborah, which continued to burn in the hearts of her countrymen and countrywomen after the lapse of a thousand years, and broke forth in the pathetic wail, in the courageous defiance of the Jewish maiden, who, unseduced by the splendours, undaunted by the terror, of the Persian court, exclaimed, with the heroic determination if need be to sacrifice her life for her country, "If I perish, I perish ! How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred ?"

That is the true voice of devoted patriotism ; that is the cry of western freedom ; that is the watchword of every Englishman and every Englishwoman who feel for their country and their kindred as for themselves ; that is the stimulating motive of every English soldier and sailor, of every English volunteer throughout the land. How can we endure the thought of the destruction of our country? How can we endure the thought that such a history, such a nation, such a civilization as that which God in His mercy has given to our keeping, should lose one jot or tittle of its honor, its happiness, its virtue, its grandeur, if we by any means whatever could possibly prevent it? By this determination *did the Jewish colonists maintain themselves, when, in the*

days of Esther, they stood at bay against the hunters of their lives ; as in the days of Deborah, "when the people willingly offered themselves ;" as by this they have remained a distinct nation, in spite of the oppression and persecution of centuries, down to our own times. By this it was that the Greeks, each feeling for each as for the members of a common household, rolled back the tide of that great Oriental invasion whereof we spoke before. When the Persian King, whose name I have often quoted, asked an European exile who stood by his side what chance there was of resistance from the small band of Greeks in opposition to his mighty host, his companion answered, "Their courage, their virtue, is the result of long education. It is the result of two things, —of intelligence, and of the force of law." And when the king yet further pressed him to say how it was possible that there could be hope of resistance in men who fought not from obedience to despotic commands, but from their own free will, his counsellor replied, "They are free, but they have a despotic master, and that master is Law ; and the commands of that Law they fear to disobey, even more than thy subjects fear to disobey thee ; and in free obedience to Law they will remain steadfast in battle, determined to conquer or to die."*

What Esther said to Xerxes at Shushan, what Demaratus said to Xerxes on the shores of the Hellespont, is still true, and will be true as long as the best instincts of the human race continue. "How shall we endure to see the destruction of our kindred?" "We conquer or die, in free obedience to the Law." This is the source of that greatness which raises the free man above the slave, which raises the civilized Christian above the barbarian, which raises the loyal citizen above the narrow partisan, the self-indulgent trifler, or the self-interested demagogue. It is the voluntary surrender of our ease and comfort, for our country's good ; it is the sense of consanguinity running through a whole nation ; it is the intelligent appreciation of the bonds of the law, in making

* Herodotus vii. 101-104.

which we ourselves have borne a part ; and of the law of God, which appeals to our own free understanding and our own free conscience.

“ How shall we endure to see the destruction of our kindred ? ” So we all speak from the inmost heart, if even in the remotest imagination of the future we think of foreign invasion. How could we endure to see the armies of a stranger on our soil, our homes laid waste, our harvests reaped for foreign soldiers, our cities besieged, our metropolis occupied ? Even the mere fictitious representation of such an event has been enough to move the hearts of all, and has opened, as it were, a living fountain of grief and indignation. It is the bare possibility of that sorrow, it is the fire of that prospective indignation, which keeps alive the spirit of the volunteers of England,—the volunteers, we may especially say, whose duty it is to guard this sacred hearth and home of England in which we are here assembled. But this surely is only a likeness of a far wider sense of grief and indignation. How can we endure to see the destruction of our kindred by those other evils, more dreadful than conqueror’s sword or cannon ? How can we endure to see our homes made desolate, our youth and our manhood wasted, by the plague of intemperance, or by the secret spread of impurity,—with all the disease and poverty and crime and fraud and brutal cruelty which these, the worst of foes, bring in their train ? How can we endure, as patriots, as Englishmen, to see this without an effort to stay the course of these hideous enemies, of whom it may truly be said that “ a fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth,—the land is as a garden of Eden before them, but behind them is a desolate wilderness ” ? How, again, can we endure to see the destruction of our people by ignorance, by the dull stolid indifference to high and holy things that leaves them as a prey to every foul passion, to every foolish fancy that takes possession of the empty soul and the idle

hands? How, again, can we endure to see the unchecked progress of fever and filth amidst the crowded and unhealthy cottages of our poorer brethren, without struggling, so far as we have the power or the means, to cast out this spirit of uncleanness, which is the spirit of misery and death, from amongst us? Again, how can we endure to see the public energies of our churches and our legislature consumed by mere party conflicts, concerning matters of no real profit or real use to any one,—when by their concentration on matters in which we are all concerned, we might trample underfoot the evils from which we all incur danger and destruction?

Let me add two remarks, in conclusion, which shall bind both parts of this discourse together.

When Xerxes, on the eve of his entrance into Europe, surveyed his immense army, amounting to a million of human beings, he burst into tears, touched by the sight of such multitudes,* of whom within a hundred years not one would be left alive. His successor looks on the vast multitudes of this city, far exceeding even the numbers of that mighty host. We know not what reflections the sight may awaken in him. But in us, who are the units in that multitude, the thought, when we see those surging masses, should be not the mere passing lament over the brief span of life allotted to each; but rather of the great things which in that brief space each one of us may accomplish for ourselves, for our country, for those moving multitudes—great and good things which shall not die with us, but shall bear fruit for our own immortal spirits and for our long-enduring country, ages hence. The sight of numberless crowds is a magnificent show, and nothing more. But the sight of a free nation, animated with high Christian purposes, might be enough to awaken the dead to life. If this spectacle has

* Herodotus vii. 100.

in any measure been exhibited to our Eastern guest, we shall not in vain have been gathered together, nor he in vain have witnessed it.

Again, it was said of old * that the characteristic training of Persian youths was to ride well on horseback, to shoot well with the bow, and to speak the truth. Whatever may be the value now attached in Persia to this maxim, the presence of our royal guest may remind us that this grand union of physical and moral training is as old as the days of Cyrus ; and the presence of English volunteers may remind us that its meaning has grown with the growth of Christian and European civilization. If the horse of central Asia, then just emerging from his wild condition, has with us been exchanged for the steed of fire and the horse of iron, which we have yoked to our fleets and armies ; if the bows and arrows which have, from the days of the earliest Eastern monuments, been the characteristic emblems of Persian warfare, are with us exchanged for the cannon and the rifle,—the great moral glory of speaking the truth, whilst it remains in itself essentially and unchangeably the same as it was 3,000 years ago on the table-lands of Persia, yet also expanded it into the vast code of high Christian duty which is implied by that lofty word. This is the bright silver shield which we should hang up in the face of all comers as that in which they may see our national character. Be truthful,—speak the truth in love ; have your loins girt with truth ; be true to your friends, be true to your wives, to your children, to your families, be true to your country, be true to yourselves, be true to God. Let no cloud or stain dim this English, Christian truthfulness. Let all contact with foreign races serve, not to pollute, but to scour and cleanse yet more the genuine, sincere morality, the pure and un-

* Herodotus l. 136.

defiled religion of practical life, which is the best safeguard of our English hearts and homes.

Let us bear in mind that the appreciation, the toleration, the welcome, of foreign guests and foreign creeds, acquires its true value only in proportion as we have within ourselves a manly conviction of the truth, the unshaken truth of that higher Christian faith which includes all that is best in all other religions, which has been the main spring of our civilisation, which is the guiding star alike of East and West.

In the one book in the New Testament which takes its imagery from the old Oriental history, there is a splendid passage where the Apocalyptic seer has ventured to appropriate those very traits of the ancient Persian monarchy on which I have just been dwelling, and to transfigure them into the very highest region. "I saw the heavens opened," says St. John in the Revelation, "and, behold, a white horse, and he that sat on the horse had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer. . . . And he that sat on the horse was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war; and he hath his name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords." * That is the figure in which the early Christians, and we after them, were called to think of our Divine Redeemer. He is the heavenly Leader of our Christian chivalry; He is the Saviour and the Lord alike of Asiatics and Europeans; He is the Captain of our salvation, and of our warfare against sin, the world, and the devil; Him we must follow to our lives' end in truth, in gentleness, and in righteousness.

* Revelations vi. 2, xix. 2 16.

GOD OUR COMFORTER.

A SERMON.

BY REV. J. OSWALD DYKES, D.D.

*delivered in Regent Square Presbyterian Church, on the morning of
Sunday, 8th June, 1873.*

God be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of mercies, and the God of all comfort: who comforteth us in tribulation."—2 Corinthians i. 3-4.

Comfort is to be distinguished from joy by this: That it is the presence, not the absence, of tribulation. It is, therefore, not to the place where "former things," death and sorrow and pain," are passed away, but attly to this present earth. It is cordial ministered to the combatants in our church militant, not the palm is held by the triumphant church. It is a blessedness to him who still mourns; not the blessedness of "the days of whose mourning are ended." We who companions in tribulation," know what peculiar and preciousness belong to such comfort as is born out of the dim hour of our sorrow. Even as starlight noonshine are tenderer things for the dark they are to relieve, tenderer than noon's splendid glare, so are gleams of love which break our night of weeping to the weeper's eye more beautiful than the unbroken light which is by and by to burst from the doors of the Kingdom. God hath no name to earthly ears so sweet as the name of "Comforter."

St. Paul leaves the Corinthians in no doubt how it is that God hath won this name and assumed this attitude towards all the trouble of which the earth is full. He did not have it as a thing of course. If suffering is just and penal, how shall He comfort in it? The revelation of God as the Comforter comes with that revelation of mercy, which, through the mission of the Son, has bared to us the heart of the Father and procured for us the advent of the Spirit. If God could not forgive and did not mean to save, comfort, so far as I can see, would be a word unknown. God's comforts mean grace in Him and hope in us. They mean that God is on our side,—has opened our prison door to let us out and opened His own house doors to let us in; that the Son has come as an angel of mercy to fetch us to our Father, and by His own exceeding and unconsolated sorrow for sin has brought to us sinners everlasting consolation. It is the Cross which has stanchd the wounds of mankind; the Crucified, who is all men's Barnabas—their "Son of Consolation." Each drop of the "wine and oil" this good Samaritan pours into our bleeding hearts was wrung out in the winepress of wrath, where His own flesh was crushed and His own blood shed. "With a great sum" has our God bought for Himself this privilege of comforting. And what cost Him so much He keeps in His own hand. He is not only the best, He is, in a supreme sense, the only Comforter. It is quite true that He does not grudge us the joy, one of earth's purest joys, of being associated with Him in this charitable and blessed ministry. On the contrary, He bids us "comfort one another with those comfortable words" "wherewith we have ourselves first been comforted of God." Having tasted in our pain His sweet cup, He would have us pass it round to others, that they too may taste. Nay, not content with this, He even sets a-running, all about us as we go through life, infinite rills and water-courses of comfort, to make the road less weary. Of how many brooks have we drunk in the way (as the

Psalm sings), that being refreshed we might lift up the head ! All ministries of love in family or in social life ; all sweetnesses of art and nature ; all joy of gathered knowledge or of exercised charity ; all sacred influences of Christian worship, word and fellowship : These are God's channels through which He makes His "water of life" to flow, directing it abundantly along each man's path and watering with happiness, or with relief of pain, every corner of this great world's field. Yet the Head-Spring of the waters is above. They "proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." To drink at them and forget whence they spring, to take men for comforters and not God, is to commit not only a crime but a blunder ; for one day God will dry up the lower streams from our expecting lips, vindicating His honor as the sole Comforter ; and if a man has not learned to go upwards to the Well-Head Himself for his supplies, he shall be left with the "smooth stones of the stream" for his portion—comfortless.

Now, I am ambitious to turn you, my people, away from foolish dependence on any of God's ordinary means of consolation, and to lead you to look for your true, chief, and sometimes only source of relief in trouble, straight to God Himself. For this purpose I wish to meditate with you on two things at least, which eminently fit Him to be, as no one else can be, our Comforter, who "comforteth those that are cast down." And the first condition of an effectual Comforter, which only God fulfils, is that He has perfect knowledge of us and constant access to us. Let us think of this for a little.

He who made us shows His jealousy of any other god before Him, by keeping open a secret entrance into our souls for His own use. Perfectly shut in, as a human being strangely is, and inaccessible, whether he will or not, to any other human being, we are all of us open to God. He, as

the All-seer, holds the key of that postern which admits to the privacies and peculiar personal properties of our inner life ; and these He searches. He visits us by night. We are known before we confess ; what we cannot disclose is understood. The very wish to be hid is not hid from Him. Now, this intimate access of God, how terrible soever it may be to an ungodly man, is strongly comforting, I do not say to saintly, but even to penitent, sufferers. For, if I am a penitent, not to say a saint, I make the good Lord welcome to my secrets. So far from hiding them from Him, I have gathered both my sins and my troubles well within my silent heart, out of reach of vulgar eyes ; and there I silently spread both of them out before Him, and find solace in the thought that in these "adversities" of mine "He hath known my soul." Here, then, is the first condition of comfort. No one can surely or entirely comfort who does not utterly understand the trouble. And human trouble is not utterly understood but by God ; for no trouble lies on the surface. It is a pain : and how can one man perfectly know what another man feels ? Even when some outside occasion of suffering is patent enough, and affects a number of sufferers in common, yet it never comes quite alike to any two ; but in each one it stirs a pain which quivers down through the man's interlaced sensibilities by some unknown association, and sets other pains a-tingling within him, and resuscitates dead griefs, and strikes at last deep enduring roots among the unsearchable experiences of his soul. No two who suffer under one blow do quite comprehend each other. Besides, how often do we all labour under depressions which have either no cause except a peculiarity of temperament or such a cause as must seem trifling to a stranger ? Are we not sometimes sad, we ourselves do not know why ? Our very joys, like roses in their fadingness, are like roses, too, in this, that they carry thorns. Life is too serious not to have a tinge of sadness in all its deep passages ; nor is that to be called the least of human pains

or the easiest to reach and console, which springs from the mere dissatisfaction experienced by the soul in her most fortunate and supreme moments, because she knows herself to be greater than her own joys.

“We look before and after,

“And pine for what is not ;

“Our sincerest laughter

“With some pain is fraught ;

“Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.”

Such melancholy is the worse to bear, that to tell it even to a friend must in most cases seem sentimental or morbid. Yet such melancholy will cling to cultured minds, especially in an age of over civilization ; and there is vast relief in being bold enough to speak out to God, if not the cause of such downcasting, at least the whole complaint and burden of it : for, by dragging it into the sweet light of His face (who is our infinite joy) we may make it flee quite away.

But if none, save God, can so know us as to comfort us in these lighter, idler troubles, which are vague, brooding, all but causeless, how much more needful is He when, now and then, under some sharp stroke of grief or long endurance of pain, one's soul sinks into depths not to be sounded by any brother's plummet ! In those rare moments of anguish which sometimes make turning points in life, the heart quite withdraws into its desolation and shuts itself in. Intrusion of the kindest is either impossible or intolerable then ; and if one knows not how to admit the God of all comfort by His own secret entrance, how profound in the loneliness ! how unrelieved the despair ! One form of mental suffering is perhaps the keenest of all, and yet it is the one which, of all others, is to be most sacredly hid from men. The pain of guilt and the shame of inward defilement and the yoke of unsubdued lust or temper ; fear and self-contempt and the writhings of a soul which would be pure in the hideous presence of its own masterful sins ; all the tribulation which comes from sin and is not to be recounted in any human

confessional, but is to be carefully covered up and buried deep, buried like a dead fly, precisely where the ointment should be purest : this tribulation which every Christian soul is doomed to carry, and the sting of which, with a refinement of torture, pricks sharpest in the still hour of closest communion with God, but can be quite escaped only by being forgotten :—who can comfort us in it but God ? I thank God He knows what we shrink from telling to any other, and are ashamed to hear ourselves name ; and what, if any other knew, he would despise us for, God knows and does not despise us. His knowledge of our baseness is the measure, not of His contempt, but of His pity ; His pity is the measure of His pardon. Instead of keeping us from Him or from His love because we are bad, it is because we are bad He invites us and makes us welcome to His love—welcome for the sake of the blood which cleanses and of which the virtue is free to every sinning human soul who desires it.

Thus it is the exceptional prerogative of God to comfort us because He knows us. “Ye people, pour out your heart before Him.” Oh, the joy of knowing that in each lonely hour and under concealed griefs, His spiritual presence penetrates us perpetually ! Instantly conscious of each flitting mood that flecks or ruffles our peace, He cannot be left behind, when, from these delicate shadows of disquiet, the soul goes back and down into never so untrodden gorges of desertion and despair. Without so much as the trouble of telling it, He knows whatever we would say, disentangles the inexplicable at a glance, reads motives which men mistake, values what they in their ignorance despise, and, to His perfect knowledge, adds perfect sympathy. For God’s heart has become, in the Man of Sorrows, the universal human heart, stretching across the experience of the race, and, in its vast compass, touching each one of our little hearts at every point, so as to throb in unison.

This is the second qualification which God has in supreme degree for the office of Comforter, and the only other one I shall now stay to notice :—that, to perfect knowledge, He alone adds perfect love.

I take you to witness that the souls of the sorrowful need to be loved more than anything else. Being, most of them bowed down and lowly, and minded to creep out of sight of merry and prosperous people, they need such love as is neither ashamed nor loth to leave the house of feasting to go, seek out, and company with mourners. This is what God says He does : “ With that man will I dwell that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” Besides, to be able to comfort, the comforter must have the patient endurance of love. People in trouble are mostly troublesome ; they fret, despond, are unreasonable sometimes, and sometimes selfish ; expecting much sympathy, and rejecting, rather than welcoming, your consolations. It is often a thankless task to try to brighten a thoroughly gloomy man’s face ; and demands St. Paul’s sort of charity, which endureth all things and is not easily provoked. The more genuine human Christ-like love we have, the fitter are we to walk in God’s footsteps with His comforts in our hearts, ministering in His own patient, persistent fashion to the peevish, the burdensome, the soured and the exacting. But above all, I find that in the heart’s cry of distress, its most imperative demand by far, is not for any condescending and enduring ministry of love, but for mere love itself. The knowledge that there is one who, knowing us, loves us, and in this trouble feels for us, whether he can help or no, as he who loves only can feel—is not that the mourner’s and the sufferer’s want ? No wonder so much charitable relief and so much neighbourly condolence are thrown away among us. Charity which is cold, having no warm heart behind it, is literally no charity at all, and though it may relieve want, it cannot assuage pain. The bitterness which has settled down upon the heart

of so many forgotten, unhappy souls in this huge capital of ours, and has made them sceptical about goodness, divine or human, greedy, thankless, and foes to order, is not due to mere want of food or of work or of such alms in their need as will keep them from dying; it is not due chiefly to the pain of any want or fear of want whatever, much less to sickness or the gloom of filthy and half-lit rooms: but most of all to this, that, when they suffer, rich and comfortable people do not suffer with them, do not care for them, do not love them; that such relief as comes, comes through stingy official fingers, an insult rather than a boon, and that their door is never or almost never darkened by the figure of man or woman whose honest human heart beats with theirs in unprofessional human sympathy. Gifts without love are worth little; love even without gifts is worth everything. Oh, love is the true arm to undergird a sinking heart; love the oil and wine to soothe its sores. What matchless comfort lies in being loved! and what vast appetite hath not this soul of ours for such comfort! This hunger crieth after God—aye, crieth in every human heart, as surely as the young ravens, though sometimes as unconsciously. It cries after God, in fact, even when it seems to cry only for earthly love; for though we seek from man what we need, it is not from man that we must get it. If the dearest friend did understand us quite and loved his best, he could not afford a love strong enough, patient enough, tender enough, constant enough, to lap us in effectual consolation in all our tribulation. I know indeed how into men's bosoms God has poured some costly overflowings from His own:—from Samaritan neighbour-love, through Jonathan-like friendship, up to the holiest ties of indulgent parenthood and the whole-hearted union of two lives in wedlock. But I know also that such earthly types of affection, were they ever found in life as perfect as God meant them to be, would still be no more than one-sided copies, in miniature outline, of another affection, archetypal, primeval, and to this

hour unlesened, which has its seat in the great heart of God. So He sets them before us Himself, when He calls Himself a "Brother born for adversity," the "Friend that sticketh closer," "Our Father who is in heaven," the "Bridegroom that rejoiceth over His bride." Gather in one all fairest forms of kinship; raise each to its ideal; they only form, at best, an unworthy chaplet for His brows, who has clustered in Himself more than a brother's sympathy, a friend's fidelity, a father's pity, a mother's nursing tenderness, a husband's mysterious consecration and undivided sacrifice. That these self-assumed titles are veritably His, and not a mere gracious but empty way of speaking on His part, God's whole dealings with us abundantly declare. Look back and forward; trace His attitude and actions toward men. From the earliest yearning of compassion over our prodigal state, of which we hear the Son of the Eternal Father tell, down to the friendly help and sympathy which was brought to us by our fast-cleaving Jonathan and Elder Brother when He was born of the family flesh and blood; then through the years in which we are each of us trained by the patient Holy Ghost, cherished in good "as a nurse cherisheth her own children," and comforted in trouble, "as one whom his mother comforteth;" and onward still and away to the sweet mirth of that longed for bridal day, when each pure soul shall be at last presented as a chaste virgin to Christ:—through all God's handling of us we trace His one round consummate love, complement and perfection of each earthly love, opening itself out through manifold forms of utterance towards our lost and ransomed souls.

Now, this Lover I set before each of you as your Comforter. I urgently protest against your being content with less. I declare to you that in no man's or woman's heart, not in the assemblage of all most faithful and tender hearts under heaven, can you or I find an affection, profound as our soul's sorrow, flexible as our soul's experience, and fit to be our

“comfort in all our tribulation.” I warn you of the undeceiving and the disappointment that shall come if you lean on human friends. To what other end the withering of loves and the disappearance of lovers rapt out of sight into the other land, but to call up your hearts and hopes to One who neither dies nor withers? Happy if shock on shock that rudely break your earthly props beneath you, send you up to pillow your heart at last on the Eternal Heart ! To what other end perhaps, is any cross or loss but to make God’s comforts precious? When the soul is smitten, it clamours for love to soothe it, for love vast and more abiding than man’s, the love of the Smiter ; it reaches out of its adversity feeling fingers after Him if haply it may touch and grasp in Him the true comfort ; and, having found Him, it reposes. Betake yourself, O restless weary soul, to His friendship. I do not speak only of the first finding of God the Saviour as a comfort in your terror for sin ; I speak of the second and third and every after finding of Him as a more and more real and practical solace in every trial. And I say, betake yourself to God’s friendship as disclosed in His old, free favour from eternity, His well proven fidelity unto death, His experienced graciousness until now ; and on that rest yourself, worn out with toil or grief or care, as on the bosom of an ultimate everlasting joy, which underlies and shall out-live all life’s brief and evanescent sorrows. To be held in the grasp of such a love is to be safe, even though (if need be) such love, being strong and wise, must carry us through both flood and fire. To feel the hold of such a love about us is to be calm and quiet at heart, even in fire or flood. To lie like a babe, in felt unworthiness and the touching feebleness of grief, upon the strong arms and in the tender breast of a regard so ancient, so honourable ; to inherit the fruits of divine travail for us ; to repose within the shelter of God’s favourable countenance, and wait for the accomplishment of His magnificent intentions :—this is to be comforted with the cream of all con-

solutions. Into such a sense of His love doth God sometimes lead His troubled saints as into an inner arbour of delight, a chamber of sweets in the waste vexed earth, whose doors I can shut upon me and be safe, an enclosed well-watered Eden, left, or rather restored, on earth, and guarded now against all serpent forms of suspicion or self-will for ever. There doth God cradle His weary child and wipe his tears away, and nurture and renew him till he wax young again like the eagle, being satisfied with the goodness of the Lord.

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”
Amen.

"WEEP NOT."—(Luke vii. 13.)

Jesus assuages the springs of grief within, does not chide the overflow of tears. But neither does He mean fully to assuage our grief here and now. So much of comfort is for earth, available at once to make more tolerable the losses of this life: so much of it is kept for the life to come. When our Lord bade that widow at Nain dry her tears, it was in anticipation of the deed He was about to do. Words are very impotent without deeds. His practical victory over death and restoration of the dead to her eyes and arms, stood at the back of His comforting address, and but for this there had been no comfort in it. One who cannot give back the lost has in truth no right to bid us "weep not;" and till the lost is given back, the heart cannot quite cease to mourn. There is, therefore, a very profound and true sense in which Christ does not undertake as yet to stay the weeping of His bereaved. It is written of another place than earth, that there "God shall wipe away all tears;" there only: and the reason is that only there will God restore to us our lost and mourned. It would, therefore, be a great mistake were we to vex ourselves as if we had missed the comforts of Christ because the burden of a great grief is never quite lifted off the heart all life through. With all very great losses I suppose it must be so. The days are never so fair as they were before. The lost are not found again. Their place is empty to the end. But this does not hinder us from drawing out of Christ's truth and the hopes of His Gospel a measure of consolation which is even now quite invaluable, which can be got from nothing else, and which, while it takes out of even the first sharpest darts of anguish their bitterest sting, mellows later regret into something which puts on a look of blessedness. The chastened and purified sorrow of a bereaved Christian is sorrow still but it has more of heaven in it than many things which men call joys.

(Extract from sermon by Rev. J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.)

ECCE HOMO.

DORÉ'S GOSPEL IN THE CANVAS.

A SERMON.

By the REV. E. PAXTON HOOD.

*Preached at the Offord Road Congregational Chapel, London,
Sunday, August 10th, 1873.*

“And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!”—John xix. 5.

THERE was a moment which seems like a pause between the trial of Jesus, if trial it could be called, in the scenery of the judgment hall and the progress to Calvary and the Crucifixion there. It was that moment when Pilate, as in the text, led the Divine Victim forth, holding over him the thin shield of his cold and cowardly, contemptuous and contemptible, exculpation, and in answer to the wild cry of the mad and furious multitude, said, *Ecce Homo!* “Behold the Man!”

Through many of the later ages of the history of Christian art, this has been felt to be a transformation moment. Singular as the expression of the Roman judge was felt to be, it was most unconsciously felicitous. To represent that moment has tasked and tested the efforts of some of the highest artists—Rembrandt, Guido, Correggio. No moment can test the artist's gift more for conception and realization; for [here must be more than meekness before injustice, or patience which might pass into apathy beneath endurance and pain,—love shining into the passion which would exclaim, “forgive,”—satisfaction unconsciously reposing in the dignity of great accomplishing purposes and ends,—royalty redeeming itself from the ruin beheld by the eyes of sense,—divinity supreme amidst the tumult of the mob, and the tribulations and agonies of the Sufferer's body and soul. Such are the emotions he to depict by the artist, when he selects for his canvas the moment when the Saviour was confronted by the sinners. He came to save, as Pilate exclaims, “Behold the Man!” Such is the moment the

eminent artist, Gustave Doré, has selected for his picture. It would not be in keeping with the purposes of this place to linger on the genius of the artist. Rapidity of execution has ever been one of the prerogatives of highest genius. Every stroke of the pencil is a movement of the soul: one becomes almost breathless as one thinks of the marvellous facility of Raphael or Rubens. It is so with Doré. Sometimes one thinks he is mightier in his conceptions as a poet than in his formative power as an artist. But I quite agree with the critic who challenges for him any rival in his command over movement, multitude, or distance. So unquestionably great as an artist, it must be a joy to us to find those powers attaining their fulfilment in using the pencil as a magician's wand—calling up the night of the Crucifixion—the night of the martyrs in the Coliseum. Artists choose their subjects by instinct; one thinks a divine instinct must have led this man.

"Pictures are the books of the simple," said St. Augustine. "Painters," said an old Cardinal, "are mute theologians." "The object of Christian art is to teach and to edify," says Lady Eastlake, in her Essays in continuation of the design of Mrs. Jameson to expound the history of our Lord as developed in Art. We may claim, therefore, for the artist Doré, that he preaches the Gospel in the canvas. Hence I am grateful that while one poet, with insensate brutality, stands before the Cross, to insult with ribaldry and inhuman coarseness, and even in our time, to curse His Redeemer; while Strauss seeks to dissolve the very personality of Christ in his alembic of criticism, and other writers turn the story of the Cross into a tale of Arabian romance; it is, I say, significant that this vast canvas transforms a gallery of illustration into a church; and by the thousands who throng month after month, with what varied feelings to gaze, reminds us of a time when in one of the earliest ages of art a sacred picture of Cimabue was greeted with such gladness that the thousands thronged in procession and hailed its execution as a season of festival.

"Behold the Man!" *That is what Pilate says.* And is not the subject worthy? Have we not often thought of many a succeeding Pilate, cold, sneering, mocking, cowardly, or at least indifferent, who has, in the very spirit of the Roman judge, unable to let Jesus alone, led him

forth to the criticism or the contempt of mankind, yet found a strange power perverting his pen from its first intentions, and compelling him to advance *His* glory whose honour he came to sully and ignore,—like Renan, who closes his unbelieving life of Jesus with those words, so solemn and sublime: "Shall grand immortality be born again, or shall the world be content hereafter to follow the paths thrown open by the brave creators of ancient epochs? We know not. But be the unlooked-for phenomena of the future what they may, Jesus shall not be surpassed; His worship shall renew his youth without end, his story shall drive forth ceaseless tears, His sufferings shall soften the best hearts, and all the ages shall proclaim that among the sons of men, there is not one born greater than Jesus." This is the language of the infidel Renan, after he has impudently described the merry Jesus, who stooped to craft and to collusion. Is it not like another Pilate, compelled to crown Him whom he had cruelly scourged? washing his guilty hands while he leads his victim forth to Crucifixion, signing his warrant for the Cross, while again and again he says, "I find no fault in Him"? So the Pilates have continued to cry through all the ages since. He is unaccountable, and He is holy. We may sneer at Him, but we cannot convict Him. "Behold the Man!"

What is art? It is that point at which the materials of the understanding in tone, word, form, and colour, become possessed by the disembodied and immaterial forces of the soul, so that they pass into and become suggestions of things not seen. What is painting? It is imagination possessing itself of reality, or reality possessing itself of imaginative and immaterial powers and resources. Portraits like those of Velasquez and Vandyck call back men from their graves; music for the time disembodies the listener. "Behold the Man!" *That is what the artist says.* But how do you account for it that Jesus is the highest object of all art? That the worship of Him has created a form called Christian art? Unbelief may possibly—I do not say it will, I say possibly it may—create an age of science. It may macadamise the world. It may create commercial fleets. But art belongs to that department of nature which is dominated by Christian sentiment. High art is impossible except beneath the plastic power of Christian truth and

teaching. Sceptics have no part nor lot in the province of art. Art, I say, is the moulding of the things of the understanding by things not seen ; for art is governed by conception, and forms and colours and tones are used by intangible intuitions. Tell me, then, how it is that Christ stands at the height of all art ? It is because He is there when human nature touches its highest aspirations and passions and hopes. He is there when the Divine, when God comes into His nearest possible relation to man. You give to Him therefore your best in music, to Him your best in poetry, to Him your best in painting ; so that you may almost say the fine arts had never existed had not Jesus lived, especially had He not died. There were arts in the world before His advent, scarcely *fine* arts, for they were suffused with coarseness. Take your highest men of any age. You could not put them where you put Christ. Take Socrates : you could not put him into an oratorio,—you could not put him into a painting which should stir the sublimest emotions and affections of our nature. Painting is a very severe test. Will it bear to be painted ? is a question you may put to many a scene and circumstance very admirable, but which could not endure that test. How is it, then, that the artists profoundest in the knowledge of all fitnesses feel that here is that which transcends them. They attempt their best. We often feel they fail because they do not reach the deep significance which simplicity feels to be the attribute of Jesus ; and so it is, the highest magnificences of art seem all to exclaim, “Behold the Man !”

It is what all history says : “Behold the Man !” I was talking with a very estimable and intelligent man, well known in this neighbourhood, immediately after my first visit to this great picture, and he said, “It is a mass of diabolism.” It is not to be denied, a mass of diabolism spreads itself over the painting,—but, “Behold the Man !” How singularly your eye is drawn away, and detained away, by that one pure majestic figure. At that moment, if ever, the words of the holy prophecy of the psalmist were fulfilled : “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? The kings of the earth lift themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed.” What brutal faces are there ! How the mob seethes in its passion ! They have

made their choice, for they had a choice. The mob has made its choice, and made it as it always will. *He*, there was, holy. "Which of you," he had said, "convinceth me of sin?" and there had been no reply. But there was a robber: tradition says a wild bandit, a coarse thief who had his fastnesses in the wilderness, from whence he had been the invader of society—a certain Barabbas, or son of Abbas. Him they chose. Jesus had healed their diseases, fed their bodies, raised their dead, taught them in words of wonderful melting sweetness and penetration. Him they rejected, saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Is it possible to paint that mob too coarsely? It was a diabolic state of society into which Jesus entered; you cannot over-colour its vices. To compare our worst with theirs would be like comparing the reeking blood and stench of the shambles with the decorum of a sanctuary. Those are Roman soldiers—they look like brutal blots upon the canvas. It was the world's worst age; its corruption and cruelty would deepen and blacken during the next few years. But this, a part of that, the world's worst age, what passions are exhibited here! Herod indeed we do not see. But there, indignantly scowling upon the real and true High Priest, are Caiaphas and Annas and Alexander; and there is Judas the traitor, cowering and cringing from the possible glance of Him whose eyes even then must have been as a flame of fire; and there is the executioner; and there are the fellow-malefactors of the Lord. "Behold the Man!" and see the amazing effect of the distance of the Man of Sorrows from them all,—the effect of all that multitude! There is His Cross, it almost bars His way, for in a few moments He will stoop beneath its awful ignominious burden. He will carry it on his shoulders up the hill; soon, soon, it will bear Him upon it. Oh, what agony hast Thou before Thee, my Redeemer, my Saviour! "Behold the Man!" Yes, He will shake all nations, He will shake society to its centre. He through that Cross will reconstruct society. He will undergo the indignity of a public execution; but, Pilate, He is to triumph over thy imperial masters, to seat Himself on the throne where they sat, when before the ineffable magic of His name all those "princes" shall have been "brought to nought." He will obtain adoration even for the execrated Cross; He will create new relations among

men, new laws for nations, a new religion. The very name of Pilate, scarcely mentioned in history, will pass into the creed which adores the Crucified. "Crucified under Pontius Pilate." And millions upon millions of millions of tongues will adore Him who preached nothing but sacrifice, and lived and died as He preached,—the claims of whose royalty were the renunciation of pomp, pleasure, and power,—whose devotees and followers were the slave, the leper, the malefactor, all that mourn, all that are forsaken,—whose constant word was "Love one another," whose prayer, while writhing in the agony of Crucifixion, was for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Diabolism in the picture! Yes, how could it be that picture without it? The rage of hell was there, the infinite mystery of the majesty of Jesus called forth all that was worst in His persecutors. But amidst the rage, look there! "Behold the Man!" His eyes are far away. Yes! that look is satisfying no triumph, no apathy, no scorn—calm, infinite, out-looking, on-looking eyes—down the long future He sees the outbursts of this hour. He sees the travail, the labour of His soul, and He is satisfied. His eyes beckon you, call you away from the wild uproar of the hour, the demon scowl,—even the gathering tempest which seems preparing to break over the doomed city. Now mark the repose of those tenderly satisfied and satisfying eyes: "Behold the Man!"

But the picture—the picture! I call you back again to the picture. And yet again it says to us, "*Behold the Man!*" And that is what the Man himself says. But why has the artist transgressed against fact in representing Christ in the white robe, when it is distinctly said he was led forth in purple? The circumstance is not so far from fact as at first appears. When Herod sent Christ from his court to Pilate he was invested with a white robe, called "a gorgeous robe." Indeed, repeatedly was that coarse indignity of the change of raiment offered him that day. Herod put on him the white robe of a Hebrew king, and sent him forth thus to Pilate, to suggest the hint of one dangerous to Roman power by his claim to theocratic authority. Pilate invested him with the purple of imperial Rome; and, beside these, we read He had the scarlet robe after He had been scourged, and then His seamless robe, for which they cast lots.

When you look at the picture, however you may permit it to rest on your mind as it appears, that is the colour in which He stands revealed to us there, at the head of all the Christian ages. A great artist has a right to compose, that is, to transfer to his picture the appropriate symbols which aid the suggestions and recollections of those who are spectators. No other colour could make the character so luminous. It may, indeed, be a question how far the aureole round the head of our Lord is a wise admission. Leonardo Da Vinci has not, if I remember correctly, introduced it into that great picture which has governed the artist mind so many ages. Artists have often erred in representing our Lord as a figure full of abject woe,—shivering, distorted, weeping; “incapable,” as one writer well says, “of ideas of love, sacrifice or glory.” The narrative assures us that at no time was our Lord insensible to either. There is not a moment in which He appears crouching or servile; and on the other hand, we are to remember He was “laying” down His life, and He restrained all the tokens of material majesty. In any case, however, you have to bring before your mind the Matchless, the Only One. It is not possible to look on that picture and fail to see that the artist intended to set before the eye the sinlessness of Jesus. The image of Jesus rises before us as the conscience of Jesus, clear and stainless in its purity. All the sensual sensibilities of Jesus were held in him as the undivergent colours are held in a pure ray. Mourners or sinners, the erring or the helpless, asked Him for sympathy, and instantly forth from the character started the soothing and the guiding light. Sin came to tempt, error to assert itself,—and instantly started forth that ray, which like a spear transpierced the sin or the sinner. His purity judged the world. If there is a touchstone of truth of character, I have often thought it is the manner with children. What sweet things He has said about children—said as He said everything else, simply, occasionally, incidentally, and without effort! And yet those simple things tax us to comprehend how lovingly He received them. “Suffer them to come to me.” There is a test of the intensity of pure natures—it is the relation with women; and women loved Him. He was much with them. You will not sympathise fully with the personality of Jesus

unless you attempt to realise a little the probable exquisiteness of the vehicle in which His mysterious soul energised. Of Him it was said, "He shall grow up before the Lord like a tender plant." By such fragile natures has the lamp of intensity been always borne. A thin frail woman will endure more than a man, will hold out longer. A man will give up the watch in a few hours, a woman will hold out for weeks. There are men like women in this. You would say they would faint at a breath; the thin muscle is steeped in the all-enduring soul. To this, in our Lord's instance, was added the exquisite tenderness of a nature through which every passion of the soul found an avenue for expression—through which every intimation from nature or man found an avenue for instruction. I say passions, for of course He had passion. How can you conceive of purity without passion? Purity is passion in its highest movement. You take that illustration from a circumstance in His life, when a woman was found taken in adultery. It is a very wonderful and crucial instance, and the author of "Ecce Homo" has found in it one of his most interesting and suggestive paragraphs. A burning sense of shame seized Jesus. Shame at the pollution of the charge itself, shame for the bitterness of the callous persecutors. He stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. Was it not to hide His shrinking embarrassment? He raised His head for a moment: "He that is without sin among you let him cast the first stone at her." It was but a word, but there was probably lightning in the look. They stole away convicted in their consciences, and He was left alone, and the woman standing there. Then He rose and lifted up Himself. "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." He said, "Neither do I condemn. Go, and sin no more." As the writer I have just now quoted truly says, "He had refused to judge a woman, but He had condemned a crowd; He had awakened the slumbering conscience in many hardened hearts; and He had given to them a new delicacy, a new ideal, a new view and reading of the Mosaic law."

This is He of whom the words are uttered, "Behold the Man!" His life was lined and illustrated by such deeds as these. And on the canvas, while from above there on the steps the voice of Pilate sounds, it seems to invoke all to

reverently regard His spotless Person. It was fitting that for Him there should be this spotless raiment. The pure white for his sinlessness was like an essence. His purity was disturbing. It brought the good more into alliance with Himself; it made the evil more hostile. It was a wonderful subtle force. What is there in that serene and white-robed form to excite their rage? As Pilate says, Why, what evil hath He done? See the howling mass! The hard Sadducee sees that which confirms his hardness; the conventional and literal Pharisee sees that which confirms his formalism; and both find that the passion of hate will abet their own carnal idea. It was the harmonious sinlessness of His own being which disturbed other beings. "He was the savour of life to life, but he was the savour of death to death," subtly, like some wonderful essence. I say His being creeps into men's beings. Look at that Caiaphas there, drawing himself up, gathering his priestly garments about him, as Jesus passes on before. All the mere human pictorial priest is alarmed within him as the Spotless One passes by; and the doltish old father priest seems smitten into more confusion by this revelation of an outer from an inner life, such as humanity had not yet disclosed, a personality which had impressed those who beheld it with the sense of its incomparable and transcendent excellence. The artist in this moment has epitomised his life. There are lives which touch ours, however slightly, and they leave us not the same; they awaken the slumbering forces within us. Yes, they are a revelation of a new world to us; they declare to us a new motive, a new power of action; they live in the invisible; we find by them the invisible disclosed within ourselves. All true love is of this nature. But with Christ infinitely it was so. His deeds were all doctrines. Sit still and look at that canvas: there is a doctrine there. I may say of the picture what the apostle wrote, "These things are painted that you may believe that this was the Son of God." "Behold the Man!"

Who was He? Whatever does He in this sphere of evil? "*Behold the Man!*" *That is what all Scripture says, what God says.* What does He look like? Martyrs have gone to the stake; we revere them on the place where they were consumed, where their ashes were strewn to the winds. But could you conceive the justice of painting one like that?

Step aside in this gallery to another picture by the same great master. It is night over the Coliseum,—that great arena of cruelty, corruption, and crime: it is night over the blue heavens of Rome. A few stars are in the sky. See there, on the ground, a heap of mangled corpses! Around them the wild beasts, having satiated their appetites, still prowl. The vast galleries are empty. Emperor, prætor, priest, and pagan or villager, have gone their way to the bath, to the dice. See hovering in the air the dim forms of angels standing—shall I say standing?—still upon their wings, consecrating by their cool presence the poor mangled remains which can feel tooth or fang no more. Yonder through the clear night they pass away along the heavens, a drifting wreath of souls, to their palms and their crowns. But you feel that you could not anyhow give to one of these the solitary eminence of that thorn-crowned sacrifice. They were witnesses for their faith in Him. But He opened the gates of those heavens to them, unlocking the kingdom of heaven to all believers. What does He look like, that mute and satisfied Majesty? What but the sacrifice of all the ages! “Behold the Man!” Is it not as if, amidst the tribulations, on the air a voice was heard from the yet speechless lips? “A body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo! I come. In the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, oh, my God: yea, Thy law is in my heart.” Does He not look like that? Is not the Word fulfilled there? “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, He opened not His mouth.” As it is written of His interview with Herod, “He answered him nothing.” And to the personal questions of Pilate, “He answered him not a word.” The mob, as if inspired in their demoniac rage with diverse instincts which rush through their bad passions and turned even wicked words into mighty truths, in their very madness fulfilled prophecies. “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.” Also from the 22nd Psalm. Were ever such wicked words so dreadfully true and beautiful? You may hear those raging voices on either hand. See that man up by Herod’s court, and that infuriated one on the steps leading down from the Prætorium. You may hear them giving the note to hundreds more, who cry, “*His blood be on us and on our children!*” Oh, insane madmen, ignorant

and besotted ! it shall be even so, but in a way you little think. Yet a few years, and the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet will be set up. Yet a few years, and not a stone of these buildings but shall feel the shock. The veil and the aisles and the air will thrill with mysterious voices, saying—while none shall know who speaks—“Arise, let us go hence ! Arise, let us go hence !” Your streets will flow with blood ; your buildings be clasped in flames. Your pure and beautiful shrine will be given to the frenzy of the soldier and the fire of the incendiary. Cæsar, whom you seek now to propitiate, will butcher you by thousands to make a Roman holiday. Titus will give three thousand of you at once to the wild beasts, to celebrate his father's birthday. Then will you remember this day, this hour. “*His blood be on us and on our children.*” And that blood will speak quite another language.

“Blood has a voice to pierce the skies,
 “Revenge ! the blood of Abel cries ;
 “But the dear stream when Christ was slain,
 “Speaks peace as loud from every vein.”

Look at that crowd ! That was the cry—the heavens rung with it : “*His blood be on us and on our children !*” Why, it was an amazing imprecation ! Can murder and madness pray ? “Father, forgive them,” said the Sacrifice, “they know not what they do.” Why, it was blasphemy inspiring the holiest prayer ! Why, it was murder invoking the spirit of the victim to sprinkle it from its sins ! See, then, the sacrifice complete. Led on by the soldiers, the spotless Lamb of God. The brow bound with thorns ; the naked feet ; the hands we would scarce dare lift to kiss, only to worship and to weep over, are ready for the nails ; the heart is ready for the spear. Oh, how cold, impersonal and inextinguishable look all tragedies, all expiations, by the side of this ! “*His blood be on us and on our children.*” His blood is there. His locks of hair are clotted with blood ; it is on his bosom and his brow and his vestment ; and there is not a drop of wrath in it all—only forgiveness and love, forgiveness and love ! For into this world of wrath he has come. In whom are all the seven spirits which are before the throne ? He has brought a new nature to the worn-out wicked heart of the old world, his blood, his life : a new eternal power in a temporal principle. And so it shall be, oh you wicked people, but not as you wickedly meant it. You have unconsciously

accepted the sacrifice, by your wild cry, "*His blood be on us and on our children.*" Precious blood of Christ, it shall fall on you, not like fire but like rain; not like a tempest but like a tear. "Behold the man!" "Look and be saved all ye ends of the earth."

"While Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,
"Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries."

And it soon began to tell. Thou shalt know it, thou poor stupid-looking fellow, who hast also to bear and to climb thy cross,—cross whence thou shalt pass to Abraham's bosom to Paradise, keeping strange company through the kingdom of spectres with the Lord of Life. Not a very promising subject, one thinks, for the Redeemer to bear with him as he travels back to his own familiar sky. Oh, but it was like Him who comforted all who mourn, and who took up with the leper in his uncleanness, and the beggar in his wretchedness,—to save the thief on the very wood. A strange group, but a group full of hope to us. No illusion possible now. When you are dying, you will not ask for such talk as might entertain you in the Phædo of Plato, or the memorials of Socrates in Xenophon. How different all this! How real! How unspeculative all this? How at home He was in His eternal idea! And what sovereignty over those gates! "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." My blood shall be on thy head although thou didst not ask it there. "In that day there *was* a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," and the spray of the fountain fell upon the head of the thief, even as He beheld the man, the priest by his side; and he was saved on the wood. So as I said, Christ even then made the mark of His ignominy the throne of His divinity. Turn to that picture, so appropriately hung opposite. Founded on Luke xxiii., the night of the Crucifixion. It is all over. The streets are thronged with awe-struck spectators, for something preternatural is abroad. It is dark. But see yonder hill, where the three crosses stand out from the yellow sky, amidst the lightning flashes. Such was the scene which broke on the eye of the rough Roman soldier. The centurion, recalling the words and the scene of the morning, the spirit of a strange fear possessed him as he said, "Truly this was the Son of God."

To close. Once more, "Behold the man!" The picture! *the picture!* I bring you back again to the picture. It has

been my instruction and my happiness to see many great pictures in Europe, the first glance upon which has been like some refreshing satisfaction to my faith. As I look on this I feel as I only have felt when looking on two or three. The great Descent from the Cross of Rubens in Antwerp pained me. Terribly real, I felt it was too much darkened by that demand the Church of Rome makes on her artists rather for such coarse animalism as of Rubens—too much, it seemed to me, of even the repulsive, the grief of Christ, rather than the glory which assuredly lit up the gloom. I have seen the wonderful picture of many martyrdoms, and of many generations,—the Last Supper of Leonardo Da Vinci in Milan, the first picture which gave majestic individuality to the canvas, and remembering that I belong to the last generation which can witness that wonderful thing from whose conception and creation art commenced a new career, I looked upon it with more of grief than joy, and I often said, Christianity is dying from the world too; faith is passing. Why should the picture remain! How that picture spoke to me from the place where it is, of the many thousands who had passed before it. Gone, while it remains, now going too. We need, I said to myself, pictures no longer, since the ages do not believe in the things they represent. But lo! here is another picture. I dare not say what place this artist will occupy by the side of the Leonardo Da Vinci or Raphaels of other times. But we may believe that posterity, always right, will hold him as sacred, and we may feel that he is raised up in such a time as ours to rebuke our too sceptical spirit and to give to us the best teaching of the ages of faith. Great artist, I would say, go on. Preach, preach still from your canvases the gospel of salvation and immortality, and bear the mere spectator, even for the brief moment of visit, into the heart of those doctrines represented by such pictured ideas!

For us, oh hearers, let us "Behold the Man!" Pass through the avenues of taste and art to that great reality of which they are only the poor and pictured types. "Behold the Man!" Art itself could find no meaning, were it not that the mystery of His being unravels its purpose, and that in His sinless beauty we have the foundation for our faith; in *His Sacrifice* the light which illuminates His example.



W. Worley Pimshon.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

AN EXPOSITION.

BY THE REV. W. MORLEY PUNSHON, LL.D.

*Delivered in the Wesleyan Chapel, Warwick Gardens, Kensington,
On Sunday Evening, September 14th, 1873.*

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”—1 Corinthians xi. 26.

THE Apostle Paul sustained to the Corinthian Church the relation of a father to a child. By him the gospel had been just preached in that rich and sensual city. By his instrumentality the first converts had been won to Christ, and with all a father's yearning does he watch over their welfare, and counsel them in their ever-recurring perplexities, and guide the heedless footsteps which were only too prone to go astray. To his fatherly care we owe the circumstantial account which he has given us in this chapter, of the institution of the Lord's Supper, for in the celebration of it among the Corinthians many abuses had crept in. This account of it, here recorded, is a valuable and very welcome revelation. He was not present, you remember, in the upper room. He was not among the awe-stricken company who were thrilled with horror by the announcement that there was amongst them a foul betrayer, and who, scarcely recovered from the shock of such sad tidings, were invited to join in the tender and prophetic feast. And yet, although he was not in the upper room, he was not left to the hazard of a traditional knowledge, nor did he receive his impressions of the scene from the glowing descriptions of another. He emphatically repudiates the thought that he had either read it or been taught it of men, and expressly states that he had received it directly from the Lord. So distinguishing was the honour put upon the Apostle of the Gentiles, and so important the institution itself, that there was given to him a new revelation, that its Divine paternity might be placed beyond all cavil, that it might be authenticated by yet weightier evidence, and more firmly held in the hearts of believers in the perpetuity of its obligations until the end of time.

To the Lord's supper, then, as thus brought before us, with its hopes and memories, with its delights and duties, standing out

an institution divine, imperative, solemn, and beautiful, our attention is to be directed to-night; and as my object, you will readily imagine, is rather practical than critical, I shall make only a few brief remarks, in the first place, on the nature of a sacrament, and more largely upon the aspects under which *the* sacrament of the Holy Communion ought to be observed.

The word "sacrament," derived from the Latin, and in use among the Roman armies to denote the great military oath by which they swore allegiance to their country, was used by the early Church to signify any of its ceremonies, especially those that were figurative and typical. Gradually, however, it became of more restricted meaning, and in the narrower sense it is commonly understood now. In the general definition of a sacrament, it may be said to be the sign and the seal of a covenant, and to distinguish it from a ceremony it must be expressly of divine institution. The creative power of the papacy has swelled the sacrament into seven; the less mystery-loving genius of protestant Christianity is content with the two which are admittedly of divine appointment—baptism, by which we are initiated into the fellowship of saints, and the Lord's supper, by which we commemorate the Redeemer's death. There are various views entertained of the nature of the Holy Communion, into the description or discussion of which I cannot largely enter, and of which I can only hastily remind you. There is the opinion of the Church of Rome, which believes that after the act of consecration the bread and wine lose their essence, and are verily and indeed transmitted into "the body and blood, soul and divinity, bones and nerves of the Son of God." We object at once to this monstrous dogma, because it is contradictory to common-sense; because in certain instances connected with the administration of the Holy Eucharist, it has led to gross and revolting impiety; because it brings us back from the dispensation of the spiritual to the age of the material, which is the Church's childhood; because it is plainly opposed to the whole scope and tenour of scripture; and because, in the quaint words of a great German critic, "it creates a new Christ, a dead Christ by the side of a living one." In opposition to this theory, and in extremest recoil from its absurdity, some have stripped the Sacrament of all religious significance, and have commended it solely on account of the salutary influence which they conceive it likely that it *will have upon* the mind, like the reading of the scriptures, the *act of prayer*, or any other duty of the Christian life. I object likewise to this bald and dishonouring interpretation, because it is an

affectation of independence to forms which has no scripture warrant; because it strips into unworthy bareness an act official and solemn; because it does injustice, as I take it, to the memory of the Saviour, takes the significance from His ordinance, and the heart and the force out of His words.

There is another view which approximates to the first mentioned, and is sometimes held conjointly, while it is held by those who would hesitate to be classed among adherents of the Church of Rome. It is this: that the elements after consecration have in them an inherent virtue, irrespective altogether of the disposition or desire of the parties by whom they are received. Who has not deplored the prevalence of this notion among the darkened masses of our land? In many instances, although the life has been consumed in sin and in neglect, or scoffing against religion, the minister is hastily sent for in the closing agony, and by the administration of the sacred elements it is presumed that the enemy is cheated of his prey and that the departing soul is somehow charmed into the happiness of the skies. I need hardly affirm my protest against this doctrine of necessary efficacy. I object to it because God makes no unconditional covenants, nor promises of help and blessing; because it has been largely used by Satan as a device to ruin souls; because it induces indifference and slumber in the hearts of those who ought to be watchful and earnest; because it proclaims other terms of salvation than those which Christ has solemnly declared; and because, finally, it transforms a holy rite into the trick of a conjurer—a “lying wonder” of perverse and manipulating wizardry.

Our view of the supper of Christ is just this: That there is in it no virtue of atonement; that there is in it no power to subdue the rebellion of a sinner; that there is not in it even any exclusive conveyance of grace or virtue; but that, rightly and reverently used, it is a blessed means of grace, an ordinance in which there lurks much spiritual profit, and which above all others draws aside the veil for the faithful, and unfolds to the rapt soul already the brightness and the ecstasy of heaven.

Now, if you please, we will dwell upon the aspects in which the sacrament of the Lord's supper ought to be considered by us all. By one or other of the sacred writers the sacrament of the supper is presented under certain aspects which unfold to us its design. Three thoughts. It is a commemorative; it is a confirmatory; and it is a covenanting ordinance. Take these three thoughts and *dwell upon them for a brief while.*

I observe, in the first place, it is a commemorative ordinance. "This do in remembrance of me." It is no uncommon thing in the history of a nation to commemorate national events by expressive symbolism. Medals are struck to celebrate a victory or to perpetuate the prowess of a hero. The statues of the wise and the valiant are niched in their country's temples. Columns rear their tall heads on the mounds of world-famed battle-fields or in some holy place of liberty. Processions and pageants, and high and solemn festivity, transmit from generation to generation the memory of great names and deeds. It is right that it should be so. We are no friends to the ruthless utilitarianism which would shear off all the trappings from rank and all the pageantry from power. They are unsubstantial, and expensive too sometimes, but they are expressions of something great and true; and by how much they are invested with a solemn and imposing grandeur, by so much more will they be fastened upon the memory and the heart. There is always hope of a nation when its gratitude lives, although the exhibitions of that gratitude may be extravagant and unseemly. If you turn from the national to the individual, how memory clings to some relic of sanctity bestowed on us by some far-off friend, some dear gage of affection, the gift perhaps in the latest hour and with the faltering speech of the precious and sainted dead. As we gaze upon them, mute but eloquent reminders of a past that has faded for ever, how closely they seem linked with our every conception of the giver, and in what unpurchaseable value do we hold them for the giver's sake! Surely, then, there is a fitness in the institution of the Lord's supper as a memorial by which the Church at large may commemorate the grandest act, and by which the heart of each individual believer may hold in memory his dearest friend. You, who have learned to love the Saviour will prize his ordinance for the Saviour's sake. You, who rejoice in the salvation bought by his dying, will not fail, with gratitude and faith, to "show forth His death until He come."

The time at which the sacrament was instituted was the time of the feast of the Passover. Take that thought for a moment. There was a notable deliverance wrought out for the children of Israel. Image it to your minds to-night. Think of a land retiring to slumber under the threat of a terrible destruction; some of those dwellers unconscious, some scornful, others apparently heedless, but haunted by a strange misgiving; and in the dead of night, when all the world is still, think of the wail, shrieking through the midnight; rising in simultaneous sorrow from palace and

mansion and cottage—rich and poor brought into immediate fellowship by the great leveller—trouble. The noise is echoed far out into the darkness, and amidst the flaring of torches and the tramp of hasty feet, each cheek is blanched with an ashen paleness and on each lip are the same dread words of agony; and gradually, as the breath comes more painfully, and the sense of loss is more distinct, the knowledge is gathered that there is destruction, and that from every home the fondest and most cherished have departed—for throughout the whole land, there is not a house in which there is not one dead. Well might there be a cry in Egypt the like of which has never been heard before, nor shall there be anything like it any more. But see, there, in the midst of Goshen, those dwellings, whose doorposts are sprinkled with blood, dwellings which the proud sons of Egypt would have scorned to enter, dwellings of menials, dwellings of slaves; but within them on that night of disaster there is no bleeding heart, nor slain beloved one, but everywhere songs of thanksgiving, firm reliance, and a chastened and a solemn joy. God has set His tokens upon those dwellings of Israel. They are the Lord's well-favoured ones, and as He passed them by, the Avenging Angel smiled. See them thrust out in haste, enriched with the spoils of their oppressors, driven into liberty upon the blast of a nation's fear, leaving the land of bondage behind them, journeying enfranchised and happy from Rameses to Succoth, and then pitching their tents as freemen do beyond the lash of the taskmaster. Do you wonder that every heart should be joyful, do you wonder that every mouth should sing, "It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord"? This was the memory uppermost in the minds of the disciples when the Saviour took bread and brake, and gave to them. It was the night of the passover, and though the veil was on their hearts just then so that they knew not the full significance of the act, nor comprehended the grand issue of their Master's mission, afterwards when they had been schooled in the upper room and had shared in the baptism of Pentecost they would understand it better, and they would see, as we see in the light of a perfected revelation, how fitly on the night of the passover was instituted the memorial of deliverance from a bondage greater than Egyptian, and from the deadlier peril of a death that never dies.

But if the minds of the disciples were filled with thoughts of a passover and its great salvation, what were the thoughts of the Redeemer? He was just entering within the shadow of His passion. There stretched out before His conscious eye the whole course of suffering which He had set Himself resolutely to travel.

His betrayal ; His arrest ; the garden ; the cross ; the sepulchre ; the mysterious contact with evil, which was to His pure soul the greatest of all possible humiliations ; the drear and lonely moment of desertion by the Father, to His pure soul the most terrible of all possible endurance. All these were before Him distinct and near. He saw the approach of the sorrow. It was "the same night on which He was betrayed." It was the *last* supper table. He gazed with ineffable tenderness upon His disciples whom he had chosen and who were so soon to be orphaned of His love. He knew them always (excepting the betrayer) to be true at heart, although infirm of purpose, and earthly in conception, and dazzled with high imaginings of a temporal kingdom. "With desire" there broke out the strong yearning love—the love that many waters could not quench or drown—"With desire, I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." As if He had said, "My time is at hand. I can no longer delay the completion of my solemn purpose. I have forewarned you of this. I go to My Father. Yet a little while and I must die. Ye are My sheep whom I have led. The spirit must work against the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock must be scattered abroad. This is the feast of the passover. Ye have been remembering its deliverance. Ah ! ye will have a tenderer memory soon. Take, eat, this is My body soon to be broken for sinners : take, drink this wine, it is the New Testament in My blood. Do not forget Me, when you no longer see Me. This do in remembrance of Me." Very deeply under such circumstances as these would the words sink into the hearts of these faithful disciples : as deeply should they sink into ours, for the words have come thrilling on, sounding with a deeper pathos down the corridors of time. We, too, must enter into the Saviour's sorrows. For us, if we believe in Him, He breaks the bread and pours the wine, and when we eat and drink we do "shew forth His death till He come." And this, dear brethren, is what we are to commemorate to-night. His death, not His life, though that was lustrous with a holiness that knew not the shadow of a stain : His death, not His teaching, though that embodied the fulness of a wisdom and the spirituality of a truth that was divine : His death, not His miracles, although His course was a march of mercy, and in His track of blessing the whole world rejoiced and was glad : His death—His body, not glorious but broken : His blood, not coursing through the veins of a conqueror, but shed—*poured out for man*. On the summit of the Mount of Transfiguration *when the hidden divinity broke for awhile through its disguise of*

flesh, and Moses and Elias—those federal elders of the former time—came down to conference, and His disciples feared as they entered into the cloud, “they spake of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” His death—still His death—death—everywhere His death—grandest and most consecrating memory both in earth and heaven.

“See Him set forth before your eyes,

“That precious bleeding sacrifice.”

You are to remember His death. You are to see your sins, all loathsome and unsightly, laid upon Him : your souls, all polluted and impure, washed by Him : your doom, all accursed and terrible reversed by Him : your life, present, and eternal, secured by Him ; and thus “shew forth His death—till He come.”

Take the second thought. It is a confirmatory ordinance. It is manifest from the solemnity of its inauguration, and from the singular reverence with which it was regarded by the early Christians, that the Lord's supper was not intended to be a thing of one generation, but to be a precious and hallowed commemoration unto the end of time. So broad and deep was the impression of its practical obligation, that in every age of the Church, alike when it was crushed by persecution and when it had degenerated into worldly alliance and conformity, the continuity of this great festival remained unimpaired. It remained in general acknowledgment amid external change. The perpetuity of the sacrament seems to stamp it as a confirming ordinance, confirming on the one hand man's faith in God—confirming on the other hand God's fidelity to man. The disciples had long cast in their lot with the Master, and with leal hearts had followed His fortunes through evil and through good report ; but they were more faithful witnesses after this night than they had ever been before, and when their Master walked no longer with them, and when their minds recalled Him as they saw Him last, receding from their view in the chariot of cloud ; and when in obedience to His command they partook of the ordinance which He had bequeathed to them, it is no wonder that they should come away from each successive celebration of the communion of His body and blood with braver purpose—more valiant in His service both to dare and to do. And it is so with God's people still. By thus “waiting upon the Lord” in His own enduring ordinance “they renew their” exhausted “strength :” they “mount up” as eagles on the wings of spiritual thought : they run on errands of charity, or walk in consistent holiness, without weariness and fainting. The sacrament confirms the two

things which it exhibits—the death and the second advent of the Lord. It seems to link the humiliation and the royalty, the scornful trial and the session of judgment, the accomplished past and the assured future together. It is the Lord's sign on earth, as the sun is the Lord's sign in heaven. It is like a pause in eloquent conversation which yet is not a pause, because the eye takes up the tale "and fills with light the interval of sound." It is the wedlock of the believer's memory and the believer's hope,—the memory which yet lingers round the Cross—the hope which already revels in the glory of the throne. It is the angels' food which the children of Israel did eat in the wilderness again dropping from heaven for the nourishment of the believer's life. We are now in circumstances nearly similar to theirs. They had a past of bondage, they had a future of blessing. They had the deliverance from Egypt to remember: they had the inheritance of Canaan to anticipate, and all through the weary wilderness fell God's sign—the manna. We have to remember the time when Christ died for us, and to expect the time when He shall come to be admired of us, and tens of thousands more. And we too are in a desert, and weakened hope and drooping faith have often asked the question—"Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Can he? Yes, and he has spread it to-night in His own banquet-hall—a feast of royal dainties, a feast of generous welcome, and He appears to His disciples with the words of invitation—"Come, eat and drink: eat my friends, eat abundantly, O my beloved." For the confirmation of your faith and of your devotedness God has set up this sacramental sign. Come with docile hearts that you may learn its mystic meanings. It is to confirm your faith in His death, in its reality—that it was not a prolonged swoon, that it was not a counterfeit of dying, that it was not a simulated martyrdom, the crowning cheat of the great imposture of this life; but that He died, that His body was broken, and that the water and the blood issuing from the spear wound were the signs of life actually departing from its tabernacle. It is to confirm your faith in His death;—in its vicariousness, to show you that His life was offered not for His own sins but for the sins of others—"the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." It is to confirm your faith in His death,—in its efficacy, as an accepted atonement, as an oblation that has made it just for God to pardon you, a perpetual reconciliation, which has made "at one" both earth and heaven. "To shew forth His death till He come"; to *confirm* your faith in His coming—in the certainty of His coming; *that the Church* is not for ever orphaned of his presence, that the

disciples need not mourn any longer over a dead Christ ; that the weeping virgin may dry her tears because her Son liveth, glorified, exalted, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. To confirm your faith in the recompense that awaits you ; for the day is coming when all wrongs shall be redressed, all mysteries cleared, the presence of God revealed, the stone rolled away from the door of every sepulchre ; no flaming sword at the gate of the new covenant Eden, every temptation overcome, all sorrows woven into elements of stronger character ; the image of the earthly faded because the fiery trial has purged the character into the reflected beauty of the King ;—sin eradicated, Satan trampled under foot, the glad welcome, the abundant entrance, the triumphal and eternal song. Of all these, believer, the sacramental sign speaketh. It sparkles for thy strengthening, with all this “fulness of joy.” Now you are called, those of you who believe in Jesus, to meet the Saviour in His confirming and witnessing ordinance. Though there is no necessary efficacy or conversion about it, do not thou, poor penitent, be discouraged, or imagine that this comfort is not for thee. If thou seekest Jesus surely He will not send thee empty from His own table away. But for you who do not love the Saviour, who amid outward decorum keep your hearts alien and habits worldly, do not deceive yourselves. There is no grace in the sacrament for you. It is rather a confirming than a converting ordinance. Like the blessed sun and kindly rain, they will shine and fall upon the stone and the stone will remain insensible, because it has no hidden principle of life ; but if the blessed sun and kindly rain shine and fall upon the flower they will foster the growth, and develop the beauty, and expand the petals, and bring out the fragrance, because the principle of life is there. Now, dear brethren, make your humble confession, your solemn consecration, to-night. Give yourselves first unto the Saviour. Repent, and be converted, and then the sacrament will be a precious means of grace ; then, through its influence, times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. Let us be strengthened by it for effort or for trial, for work or for suffering, and your souls, like so many passion-flowers, warmed into beauty by the sun, will exhibit the tender memory of the Saviour's passion, and thus “shew forth His death till He come.”

Just another thought. It is a covenanting ordinance, and this follows upon the two preceding. The definition of a sacrament appears to lack completeness, unless it be recorded not only as a *sign* but as a *seal* : a solemn federal act which involves mutual

pledges—pledges of fidelity on the one hand, and pledges of blessing on the other. This is clear from the statements made in the sacred writings. When the psalmist, speaking of the magnitude of His mercies, a magnitude that bewilders him, looks about for some appropriate expression, he finds it in the words: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." And the next verse contains the translation of the symbol: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all His people." And your participation, dear brethren, in the Holy Communion is to be thus regarded as the fresh act of your espousals, as the solemn renewal of your covenant, as your surrendering yourselves entirely unto the service of the Lord. It is thus that you confess Christ, and witness of Him to the world. If you eat and drink without discerning this great purpose, you eat and drink unworthily. If you repudiate this purpose either in thought or act, then you "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame," and by your profane use of the means of grace, without the slightest desire for the grace of the means, it is as though you cut and wounded the Saviour in the very house of His friends, and sharpened the dagger of your treachery upon the tables of the violated law. But I am speaking to those who love the Saviour, and who will rejoice to confess their attachment and to renew their covenant in the ordinance of bread and wine. Your heart longs for this—*longs*! No other word will express the devotion that throbs with affection and reverence towards the Saviour. And yet there is a natural distrust of yourselves which causes you to hesitate before you enter into a transaction so solemn. Well that you may take this Holy Sacrament for your comfort, and that the cup may be to you a cup of blessing; remember that there are two parties to the covenant, and that the sacrament is the divinely instituted seal of the fidelity of God's promise to you. Just as in allusion to the ancient custom of ratifying covenants, the presence of the Lord under the guise of the smoking furnace and burning lamp, passed through the divided portions of Abraham's sacrifice, that he might know thereby that he should inherit the land that as yet was afar off, so in the symbol, not in the fire, but in the still small voice Christ comes down in the sacrament for your consolation and mine. Listen! The Lord speaks to the father of the new world, as He looks from the altar of Ararat, upon the earth, from which the waters have been but recently assuaged. "I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of the covenant between Me and the earth." Now you can imagine how the patriarch would regard that,—how he would impress it upon his children and

his children's children, and they on their posterity in ever lengthening succession; and you can fancy how some patriarch of an after generation would hush the fears of the timid ones as he pointed in the hurricane time to the brilliant arch that spanned the angry cloud: "Look there! it will subside by-and-bye: there is the rainbow. Never mind the blackened heaven and the howling tempest: there is the rainbow. Do you tell me that the skies pour out water, that the heaven sends out a sound, that the river is bursting its banks, and that the foundations of the deep are broken up:—there is the rainbow. God has set it in the cloud, and in it He says to the proud waters, 'Hitherto shall ye come but no further.'" Dear brethren, here in the Sacrament is the rainbow of the new and of the better covenant. Behold the renewed pledge of salvation purchased and imparted, and of blessing conferred upon you all who believe. Oh! the simplicity of the condition,—upon him that believeth in Jesus. And now as in your covenant you pay your vows—time, talent, influence, property, all God's, you are reminded, looking upon the rainbow, that it is a sign of God's mercy and His pledge of blessing to yourselves. You must remember there are two parties to the covenant. You surrender, God bestows; and the costliest of all His gifts is the gift of His only begotten Son. All heaven by that great gift is yours. Paul, Apollos, Cephas:—small gifts these. This world, the world that is to come, all the accumulated riches of earth, all the accumulated riches of heaven, life with all its opportunities, death with all its boundless developments, and all the grandeur hidden behind it, all are yours if ye are Christ's, for Christ is God's. Oh! how exquisite this, that we are able to cover our frail erring nature in His exalted and glorious one, whilst in a mutual covenant we "do shew forth His death till He come."

The Lord's Supper! I cannot invite you all to it, because I fear lest there should be some in this congregation whose dispositions are alien, and who have no desire after God and after the knowledge of His way. Give yourselves to Him: renounce your sins from this moment. Pray for the clean heart and the right spirit, and offer yourselves a virgin offering in all the fulness of your manhood unto the Lord, and then I can invite and welcome you gladly. But there is another supper to which I can invite you all—the great gospel supper to which the Lord has commanded his servants to go and gather guests, in order that the guest chamber may be full, and that the banquet may be eaten, and that the rich *feast He has prepared—milk and honey and all the dainties that*

are provided for His beloved—may be enjoyed. He has commanded that the poor and the needy, the halt, the lame, and the blind, the leprous, and the unclad may come, for He will cast none out. From the highways and hedges, from the streets and the lanes, the guests are invited that the banquet chamber may be filled. Come, dear brethren: thou poor sinner who hast come hither on purpose that thou mayest have a word of blessing—it is here. Your Master and mine—yes, your Master and mine, invites you to the gospel supper to-night. Come, for all things are now ready. There is not one in heaven that would not rejoice over you, if you will but come. There ought not to be one on earth who would not rejoice over you if you will but come. Come! cast all your difficulties behind you; come in your rags—your Master is inviting—not the rags, but the humanity that is underneath the rags. Come as you are, without one plea: accept the invitation and the warrant of Him who cannot lie. Come! He will in no wise cast you out. There is no language can go beyond that, and there is no ingenuity of morbid unbelief can get out of it. Then when you have come to the gospel supper, you won't be long before you find your way to the Lord's supper, and then each one of you, by the blessing of God, may sit down at last at the marriage supper of the Lamb. May God bring us all there for the Redeemer's sake!

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

A SERMON.

BY THE REV. DONALD FRASER, D.D.

Preached in the Marylebone Presbyterian Church, on October 5th, 1873.

“This is a great mystery ; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.”—Ephesians v. 32.

THE church in union with Christ is a great theme of the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is shown to be chosen, accepted, endowed, and enriched in Christ. It is His living body, holy temple, heavenly Bride ; the body of the Lord, the temple in the Lord, the Bride for the Lord.

As this Epistle reaches farther forward than perhaps any other into the counsels of God concerning His redeemed, so also it begins further back, and recalls some of the earliest scenes in human history. It explains the heavenly places which God assigns to the church, by the garden which he planted in Eden, where the first man and woman of our race dwelt in union.

Adam was the son of God and heir of the world. So is Christ, and in a far more exalted degree. It was not good that the man should be alone in his inheritance, and therefore God made “an helpmeet for him” and brought her to the man. So also it has seemed good to the divine wisdom that Jesus Christ should not be alone, but have a Bride to dwell in His love and share His inheritance.

Now the woman was not only made for the man but also made from him—taken out of his side. “The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept, and He took out one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof, and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.”

Sign this of the deep sleep of death which fell upon Christ, and of the great spiritual truth that the church derives its very life from the Lord, so that Christians are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. This is in virtue, not of the incarnation, but of the atonement. The former brought Christ into our nature, not us into communion with Him, but from His deep sleep and burial He has derived His Bride. As from the riven side of Adam was formed the woman, so from the riven side of Jesus Christ is constituted the church. It is of Him as well as from Him, and, because of its origin, has a profound sympathy with Him and a community of life. In a word, the church is, after an ineffable, spiritual manner, an extract from or product of the last Adam even Christ.

This is true properly of the church complete and corporate. No individual Christian, or party of Christians, can claim to be the body or the Bride of Christ. This honour belongs to the whole assembly of saints. But the doctrine is profitable to believers individually, that they may know their church calling, as involving their having been chosen in Christ, and having received all spiritual life from God in virtue of the wounds and death of Christ. Now they are rooted and built up in Him, strengthened and solaced by Him:—"for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth, even as the Lord the church."

When Adam rose from his deep sleep, God brought to him the woman who should be his helpmate and consort, and the words which ever since have described and consecrated marriage were spoken by the risen man. It was not the union of Adam and Eve, for the name "Eve" was not given till after the Fall. It was the marriage of Ish and Isha—the man and the woman. So to Christ risen from the sleep of death is brought the living church, and the marriage is "to Him that is risen from the dead." This is the ideal of the church's position now—a position to be manifested and declared with great joy when the church which is

now in course of formation, growth, and purification, is completed, and the Bride is shown in her beauty as the Lamb's wife:—"a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish."

"This is a great mystery." The apostle Paul meant by the term "mystery" a great religious truth, long hidden from the minds of men, but at last made known in the Spirit. Thus he spoke of the formation of Jews and Gentiles into one body, the church, as a great mystery; and the humiliation and exaltation of Christ as the mystery of piety in contrast with the mystery of iniquity. In the same sense he describes the union of Christ and the church as a great mystery. The Vulgate has the translation "*Sacramentum hoc magnum est*," and as the word "sacrament" came in course of time to be ascribed to certain religious rites supposed to be the authentic channels of divine grace, it has resulted that this verse is quoted to prove that matrimony is a holy sacrament and one of seven sacraments. This much we must on our part affirm, that the whole passage in which our text lies elevates and ennobles the conception of marriage among Christians. That which may be used to illustrate the holy intimate union of the Redeemer and the redeemed is indeed an august and sacred ordinance of God, but then it is not a sacrament of the church; it is not even confined to Christians but belongs to the human race. The answer to those who on the authority of this passage talk of the sacrament of matrimony is easy. It is the union of Christ and the church, not the union of an ordinary husband and wife that is called "a great mystery." Moreover the word "mystery" nowhere in Scripture means what ecclesiastics call "a sacrament." Our divines have been wont to allow two sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—though we should have done much better had we avoided the word sacrament altogether. But those two ordinances which have authority and dignity in the New Testament are nowhere called *mysteria*. On the other hand, we have the mystery

of the church position of the Gentiles—the mystery of the seven stars, and the mystery of the woman in purple and scarlet and the seven-headed ten-horned beast that carried her. If “mystery” is to be translated “sacrament” are these also to be added to the other seven ?

But to return to the truth before us. The church mystical or spiritual is the Bride of the Lamb, and of the Lamb as slain and risen from the dead. Alas ! it is plain that the things spoken of the marriage as well as of the formation of the church apply properly to the whole of the church and not a part. Nevertheless the truth and comfort of these things may be known to particular churches and even to individual Christians who know their high calling of God. St. Paul said to a particular church, “I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to Christ,” and the same apostle writing to individual Christians thus expresses their new relation to Christ :—“My brethren, ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” To the same end are directed the efforts of Christian preachers ; and when these are successful the power is of the Holy Spirit, whose continual function in the present dispensation of grace is to gather and form the church by uniting individual believers to Christ, and thus to preserve, train, and purify them with a view to the final presentation of the whole church to Christ in the glory which shall be revealed.

Now, consider what this union imports and how rich it is in Christian help and consolation. It secures,

(1.) *Acceptance with God.* Adam was the head of the wife. To him, not to her, was God’s covenant spoken. In him she had acceptance. So “Christ is the head of the church.” With Him the covenant stands: in Him the church has acceptance. On the marriage ordinance which makes twain one rests the whole justification of the church. Christ *is justified*, and so the church in Him. The doctrine of

imputation to which so many demur is made reasonable and credible by this doctrine of union. It is not that the merits and demerits of entirely separate persons are interchanged, for Christ and the Church are not separate but joined together by God. The wife is called by her husband's name. Her obligations are discharged by him, and she is installed in the position he has made for her and for himself. It is impossible that Christ should be accepted and the church or any real member thereof be condemned.

(2.) *Daily guidance and defence.* The church has a right to rely on the help and protection of the Lord. Is not her cause His cause, and are not her enemies His enemies? Yes, truly, for when the early church was persecuted the Lord demanded from heaven, "Why persecutest thou *Me*?"

There are enemies, and those the most cruel, who are not seen, and to these the next chapter of this epistle refers—recalling the third chapter of the Book of Genesis. The woman in Paradise was tempted and fell. So soon as we see her formed and married and resting in the garden of God's presence, we find her exposed to the wiles of the devil. Her husband was not by her side to protect her, and, incapable of repairing her fall, he only shared it, and so let sin come into the world. Now the Church is formed, is betrothed to Christ, and set in an enclosed garden—the high places of privilege and communion with the Lord. But it is there that she encounters her greatest dangers, which come not in or from the world, but in the spiritual sphere and from spiritual foes. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Every device of malice is persistently put forth to corrupt from simplicity and integrity the Bride of the last Adam, and she too would fall—particular churches and individual Christians have often miserably fallen—but the Lord will not suffer His Bride to perish, and He will not suffer His people in detail to be

tempted above that they are able to bear. He is near to succour them that are tempted. The woman in the garden of Eden stood in the strength of her innocence, but stood alone, and one device of the devil overthrew her. We, alas ! are not innocent ; we know good and evil, but we are not alone and should not be unarmed. It is possible for us, through the strength of the Lord and the power of His might, to stand against all the wiles of the devil.

(3.) *The perfect government 'of love.* Christ's rule over His church has in it no mere compulsion or absolutism, but is that of a husband who loves his wife even as himself. The obedience of the church has in it no element of slavery, but is the loving compliance of the wife who, faithful to her husband, always inquires for her guidance what is according to his mind, and is most free and happy in the perfect accordance of her will with his. The church is faithful to her marriage bond when she consults, in all her decisions, testimonies and actings, simply the revealed will of her Lord and husband.

(4.) *Intense, unfailing sympathy.* The love with which Christ nourishes and cherishes the Church passes knowledge ; yet we may know the love that passes knowledge. Individual Christians have tasted of it, and they most deeply who have been by trials and sorrows most cast upon the Lord. When they are afflicted, He is afflicted ; when He is rejected, they are grieved ; when they do well, He is glorified ; when He is honoured, they rejoice. As an old writer has finely said, " Christ and the saints smile together and sigh together."

There is present help in time of trouble. There is a sure answer to the frequent cry of the soul for light and comfort ; but, better still, here is that thing, exquisitely sweet and swift as lightning—a perfect sympathy. And this can never fail. The marriage bond is quite indissoluble. Whom God hath joined together, no power can put asunder. The marriage cannot be broken even by death

itself, which disturbs all our loving unions and sweet companionships. Death cannot separate us from the love of Christ. It cannot touch the Bridegroom, for He is already risen from the dead, and can die no more. It cannot touch the Bride, for the church is quickened together with her Lord and made partaker of His risen life ; because He lives she lives also, and lives for ever.

But a marriage bond may continue after affection has ceased. This cannot be on the part of our Blessed Lord. The obligations involved in His blessed union with the church He will never renounce or neglect, for His affections change not; and though His people, alas ! falter in faith and come short in duty, He abides faithful. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." In this, surely, there is strong consolation. We have to lament that our faith is not steadfast, or our love a fitting response to His ; but He who binds us to himself is an unchanging Saviour :—holy life is in leaning on His arm ; holy death is in sleeping on His bosom. He has said, " I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Happy people that are in such a case, and have part and lot in this great mystery ! It is required that they be faithful and go not after other lovers, but loyally devote their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ. Unhappy people, who know nothing of the love of Christ and the marriage union with Him ! What shall they answer for having rejected the Saviour, and gone after idols and loved them ?

He comes again to receive His people to Himself. If you reject Him now, what will you do when the church springs up to meet the Well-beloved ? What will you do when the marriage supper of the Lamb is come ? We beseech you to reject Him no more. Let the Lord turn your hearts to Him in this day of grace, else there can be for you no day of

glory ! Let each of us fall in with the strain of one who has said—

“Fair Jesus ! wilt Thou marry even me ?

“Amen, amen, amen ; so let it be !”

THE CHURCH OF GOD.

To draw a distinction between Israel and the Church is not, as some misrepresent it, to make two ways of salvation, or to separate Christians from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. All who, in the old time before Christ, were "Israelites indeed," were saved on the same footing of free grace with the believers, Hebrew or Gentile, who have lived, or may yet live, in the age of the Church; and one covenant of promise includes them all as heirs of God, and children of His kingdom. But the constitution of the Church is different from that of the House of Israel. Its scope is more extensive; its dispensation more spiritual; its manifestation of the Divine wisdom more complete; and it yields a fuller tribute to the Divine glory.

Israel is the woman clothed with majesty, and crowned with twelve stars for the twelve tribes, that brought forth the Man-child, the destined ruler.* The virgin daughter of Zion ended her long travail in the birth of Messiah at Bethlehem. To her a Child was born, a Son was given, whose name is the Wonderful. Christ sprung from Israel: but the Church sprung from Christ, by co-resurrection with Him. She could not exist till Christ had risen; and if we would speak accurately, we must say that she was born on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. From that day, she has been in course of growth and preparation for "her Husband." It does not yet appear what the Bride shall be, but her calling is manifest, her days of purifying run on till she shall be presented to her Lord; and then her inheritance is secure, and her joys are full.

The true Church on earth is best seen from heaven. She is a spectacle to "principalities and powers;"† by which we

* Compare *Gen.* xxxvii. 9—11, with *Rev.* xii. 1—2. † *Eph.* iii. 10.

suppose are meant beings, or orders of beings charged with authority in heavenly places ; creatures, but of lofty rank ; rulers and governors under God and His Christ.* Before them is displayed by the Church, "the manifold wisdom of God," more fully and convincingly than it was shown even in the ordering of the world, or in the calling of Israel. So while worldly men cannot see the spiritual nature and beauty of the Church, and externalists fix their eyes on mere form and ritual, the principalities and powers above, and, in their measure, all on the earth who have a heavenly mind, watch with intense interest the progress of the Church, recognizing in her a masterpiece of God's wisdom, and the Bride destined for Immanuel, as "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish."†

Christ first appeared ; then the church. So it will be again. Christ will appear in glory. Not till then will the Church be manifested in all her holy beauties, and in all her fellowship of glory with her Lord. Of this signs are given in the Old Testament.

Adam was first in existence, and in lordship over the earth ; then "the woman" was formed and "brought unto the man." She was the "divinely intended" helpmeet for him ; crowned his joy, possessed his confidence, and shared his dominion over the creatures and his position of favour with God. So the last Adam must be in manifestation and in dominion over the earth before the Church, which is "flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone," is brought to Him to share His throne and His inheritance.

Jerusalem is another figure of the Church, and Jerusalem was the last city captured and possessed in Canaan. Joshua took the land, and divided it by lot among the tribes ; but neither Joshua, nor any of the Judges after him,

* See Colossians i. 16 ; 1. Peter iii. 22.

† Ephesians. v. 27.

nor even king Saul, ever possessed name or power in Jerusalem. The purpose of God concerning that city was hidden for hundreds of years, till the great era of David's accession to the throne. Then the capital city, long destined to that dignity in the divine counsel, because the seat of power, government, and holy worship for all Israel—the city of the great king. So must the Son of David come to the Kingdom, before the Holy City, New Jerusalem, can “come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

This is shown to us largely in the visions of John the divine. Seals are broken, trumpets blown, and phials poured out. The cycles of judgment are completed, Babylon is overthrown, and then there rises a shout of joy that “the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Wife hath made herself ready.” Still she does not appear till further struggles are accomplished; kings of the earth are conquered by the King of Kings; the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire; Satan is bound and imprisoned in the abyss; and Christ reigns with His saints on the earth. Then, and not till then, is shown the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, holy Jerusalem. This at last is the Church in her consummate beauty, displaying the wisdom and shining in the light of God. On this shall principalities and powers in heavenly places gaze with joyful wonder; and in this shall glory redound to the God of salvation through ages yet to be unrolled.

This way of thinking about the Church may easily be used as a pretext for a sort of pious indolence and inefficiency. Men, who cannot but see unscriptural corruptions and disorders in this or that part of the Church visible, may excuse themselves from attempting reformation on the plea that the time for perfection is not yet, and that nothing better can be expected of the earthly manifestations of the Church, till the Lord come. But this is a mere selfish abuse of holy doctrine. The true ideal of the

Church should be to us not a mere dream of the future but the standard which we constantly labour to reach. If we do not our uttermost to bring the visible Church into harmony with the primitive model and revealed ideal, our Master will judge us to have been slothful and unfaithful servants. On the other hand, if we loyally occupy our own time, walking in the Spirit, loving all saints, maintaining high church doctrine according to Scripture, and fostering true Christian life, we are the harbingers and unconscious prophets of the still better time, when the Church shall be unblemished, and all Israel shall be saved, and the nations even when they dwell not within the City, shall walk by the light thereof.

Extract from "The Church of God and the Apostacy," by Rev. Donald Fraser, D.D.

THE FINISHED LIFE OF THE SAINTS.

A SERMON.

Preached at St. George's, Campden Hill, Kensington, November 2nd, 1873.

By REV. C. MAURICE DAVIES, D.D., Curate.

“It is finished.”—St. John xix. 30.

THERE come times in the history of every redeemed soul when it is possible to apply to that soul terms and phrases expressive of its likeness to Christ, which, up to that time, it was not possible to apply. This is the outward and visible sign of that soul's Heaven-ward progress, of its gradual conformation into the likeness of its Saviour; just as when you sit and gaze into that little living mystery, a child's face, you catch every now and then, and oftener as the child grows up from infancy to maturity, some trick of a dead father's face, some lineament which seemed to have escaped you hitherto, but which tells you plainly whose the child is.

So it is, as you look about upon those of Christ's saintly family who are still militant here in earth. You shall see one who is plainly taking up the Cross daily and following Christ, whose visage is marred by sorrow or suffering, into what you know is the likeness of the Crucified. You see good obedient children acting over again the beautiful story of the Nazareth Home: see young men going out on God's service, and saying to some dear one they leave behind, “Knew you not that I must be doing my Father's business?” All these are lines of likeness to Jesus which we can see

in the familiar saints of our households, families and congregations—traits which make our society a Christian one.

And now—now in this sad sere autumn-tide, when all is gloomy around, in England's gloomiest month, and the leaves of the dead summer are lying dry and withered beneath our feet—we think, most appropriately, of the very last line of such likeness which could possibly meet our gaze here : when we could apply to our dear household saints—then dearer to us than ever—the words of the Saviour on the Cross, “It is finished !” It is as though we should look, no longer in the living child's face, but at that countenance pale and fixed in its solemn sleep, and, stooping above the coffin, ere we closed it down for the last time, say, “How like the child is to its dead father *now !*”

In old times of the faith, before judicious hands had cut away much which man's misuse had made stand between himself and God, instead of, as it was meant to do, binding him more closely to God—this was the day when of all others he thought most truly of those who had departed hence in God's faith and fear. Yesterday was the day of the great Bible saints whose names stand red in the calendar ; but to-day was the time when mourners went, and many go still, to the graves of those whom they themselves had laid to sleep in Jesus ; and when their memories, though not their names, were consecrated by loving observances in Church ; it was All Souls' Day, the day of those canonised in affectionate hearts, though not in Church calendars. Perhaps that was why the festival *was swept away*. There was no need to suggest its *observance* ; no need to hedge it about with sign or cere-

mony, because it was a festival which, with a common instinct, people were sure to keep.

So it is that we, whose steps are turned towards the fords of Jordan, come down to-day in thought, as it were, to the very brink of the solemn river and think of that "part of the host" who "have crossed the flood." When we muse of our lost beloved ones as last we saw them here; when we look down into the depths of the awful river shrouded with the darkness of the Valley of the Shadow, then it is those symbols of likeness to the Saviour expressed in the words "It is finished," come home with their full meaning. But by and bye, straining our eyes through the river-mists and gloom we see a glorious vision on the farther side, and instead of the almost mournful refrain, "part of the host have crossed the flood, and part are crossing now," there bursts from our lips the ecstatic song:

"Who are these like stars appearing,
These before God's Throne who stand?
Each a golden crown is wearing,
Who are all this glorious band?
Alleluia, hark they sing,
Praising loud their heavenly King!"

Will you bear with me for one moment and not think me egotistical if I make a remark about self? As there are those ministers who feel it their mission to lay down plainly and dogmatically God's word of truth enshrined in the Bible and the creeds of the Church; as others point out to you, in the path of Christian morals, what you must *do* to be saved, how supplement your faith with works; so there are others again, and I confess myself among the number, who feel often commissioned (one dares not say inspired) to *speak of the results* of these things. Sometimes when sitting

in my quiet study, and anxiously casting about for some word to speak to you next Lord's day, so intensely real does the so-called supernatural become, and so strongly is there borne in upon me "the grandeur of the dooms we have imagined for the mighty dead," that I feel it would scarce startle me if, in the silence that reigns around, I heard the whispered sounds of a once familiar voice, or from the darkness saw gradually form the beloved features of one of those whom I have "loved long since, then lost awhile." And so, perhaps, I seem to some of you too often to harp on one string, to devote myself too exclusively to one subject, which to many practical people appears visionary. It is not, however, that those who so speak claim any special revelation, any open vision, but simply that by taste or temperament, or by God's guiding, they are led to look more at one set of facts than another, just as the theologian or the moralist looks at his set of facts. So do those "visionary" people love to gather from the words of Christ, or from the comforting history of the great Forty Days, or again from the glowing pages of the Seer of Patmos, bright inklings of those good things prepared for us, when of us, as of those about whom we think to-day, shall be written as an epitaph the text, "It is finished."

For them is finished what we call—but it would seem much miscall—life, the little span of earthly existence, short at the very longest. All the "to-morrows and to-morrows and to-morrows" which seemed to them—perhaps to us in reference to them—to succeed one another with such wearisome monotony, are over. They are merged in the long morrow of eternity. Sometimes, when we lose ourselves *in thought*, it seems as though it could not be so, that their *life could not be finished*, that we should meet again

to-morrow, or in a short while, as we met in the old time after some transient separation. But we wake from our reverie and know that it is not so. Their life, as regards this world, is finished—"hid with Christ in God," our faith tells us ; but in reference to the old walks of life where we used to meet them, finished, quite ended and over.

And so, too, our association with them is finished, cut in two by their death as by a sword-stroke. Sometimes, as for instance when we recite the Apostles' Creed and say we believe in the Communion of Saints, we feel an impalpable kind of link still existing between us ; but it is far too unreal, far less substantial than we feel it ought to be. Between us and them there is as truly a great gulf fixed as between the Rich Man and Lazarus. There is memory, yes ; and people talk about living on memories of the past, but it is a very unsubstantial kind of fare. Our poor hearts almost starve and droop when we think how utterly finished and over and done with seems, in spite of our Christian creed, the association with those who we know are but gone on one stage further in the Heavenward journey.

And the question will, I know, sometimes surge up to the surface of consciousness,—Is the association of necessity quite finished even here and now? If they, on the other side, are equal to the angels, are potent ministers of good to us, may it not be only an act of volition on our part that is required to renew the association even now? There are some, as you know, who return a very decided answer in the affirmative to this question, who profess to converse with the departed even more familiarly than of old ; but so vast is the demand they make on our faith, and so slender the facts they have to offer us in proof, that the testimony is insufficient, and so

silence reigns round the grave of our sleepers, and the association *is*, despite our heart's strong wish, finished—broken !

But, if memory survives with us, do we believe that it has ceased with them ; and, if it has *not* ceased, how does it affect them ? That is the question that comes back continually to baffle us. Have the saints departed, necessarily forgotten the saints in the flesh ? Do our dead friends forget us ? Such is the practical form the demand takes with us. One can see no possible reason why memory should be denied them, or why the event that cut *them* off from our gaze should cut *us* off from theirs : though we must believe that, even if their old interest in us survives, it survives in such a shape as to exist without disturbing their peace. That I think we must believe ; and it is indeed strange that an old heathen writer—the greatest perhaps of all—in his gropings after truth, wrote thus on the question whether the dead are touched by the fortunes of the living :—“ That the dead should be in no wise affected by the fortunes of their offspring and friends appears an unkindly doctrine and contrary to what seems true. But as events personally concerning ourselves sometimes affect us more and sometimes less, so with the dead. If our fortunes reach them, they reach them slightly and indistinctly, rather like those circumstances in a play which are narrated at second hand than those which are acted before the eyes. The good and evil fortunes of their friends, it would seem, do reach the dead, but not so as to make the happy miserable, or the miserable happy.”

No Christian need apply to a heathen philosopher for comfort or assurance ; but it certainly is remarkable to find *the human mind* thus running in a direction so closely

parallel with that which it assumes under the guidance of revelation. So then, it is our belief that the saints of God who have passed away are—living still, of course—but not living in mere inaction: consciously, actively living a higher life than the present, even a spiritual. With the body they have put off all that body's imperfections, never to re-assume them.

But, on the other happier side, probation is "finished" for them. Over and done for them the world's rough work, and the blessed Sabbath of rest attained. That we know, at all events. They have borne the burden and heat of the day, life's heavy burden, and earth's tropical summer-heat; and then the cool calm evening came down, and we laid them, as the mother lays her child, white-robed to sleep in their narrow bed:—

"Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing around them;
Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest and for ever;
Thousands of aching brains, where theirs no longer are busy;
Thousands of toiling hands where theirs have ceased from their labours;
Thousands of weary feet where theirs have completed their journey!"

That river to whose solemn brink we have come to-day is like many an one we may see here in England, like London's own silent highway itself in many and many a point of its meanderings. Here, on this side we have all the noise and din, the squalor, sins, and sorrows, of a vast city, which repeat Babel for us in the nineteenth century; there, on the other side, far-stretching meadows, quiet woods and breezy heaths that seem to mirror out the Paradise of God.

So most truly is it with them of whom we speak our text. They have left the workshop of the world; and, their day of work over, they have gone to the home of the *waiting saints*, Home to God. "Nearer my God, to Thee,

nearer to Thee." Nearer than they were, nearer than we are, though there may be infinite grades of progress left for them yet, as they change from glory into glory, "till they stand before God's face !"

Finished the clash and strife of creeds, that weariest of all the world's warfare. Here they fought the battle, there they wear the crown. Now at last they have "One Lord, one Faith." They realise the grand ideal for which they strove in vain here. Full-voiced, and, thank God, in unison at last—they sing the Lamb's Song upon the deathless hills. Finished the poor quibbles of controversy, the questions that gendered strife ; they stand ever in the light of God's truth. Finished the weary disputes about vestments and decorations and worship. There they stand, white-robed, with the palms of immortality, all worship absorbed in one common act of praise to the Lamb who redeemed them, and washed their poor travel-stained earthly garments white in His sacramental blood !

That, after all, is the original import, and the most significant meaning still of the text. Breathed out from Calvary among the seven golden sayings of the Gospel, it was, as regarded the Incarnate Saviour Himself, the announcement of finished atonement : His life-work, His earthly ministry, were finished. Finished the work God gave him to do, into His Father's hands He gently commended His parting spirit. And here it is the saint's history comes most closely into contact with the Saviour's. By His might, not their own, have they triumphed over the last enemy, death.

From the proto-martyr himself, whose early death reads *almost* like a facsimile of the one great martyrdom of all, *down to our own household saints, of whom we think to-day,*

down to the simplest child who has fallen asleep in Jesus with baptismal waters wet upon its baby-brow, it has been ever the same. It was in the blood of that Lamb who was slain that their garments were washed white and glistering. In every case, whether death supervened upon actual innocence and found them

"Lying in their robes of whiteness,
Like a pure and stainless child,"

or whether a previous process of conversion was necessary, echoing out in long reverberations the mighty "Follow me,"—lo, a transfiguration! Transformed into closest conformation with their risen and ascended Lord, it is only under the same limitations as Christ himself that the departed saints can have applied to them the words of the text. As long as we thought of them—I speak again of the saints of our homely calendars—as long as we thought of them only as former occupants of our homes, members of a broken circle, it was true to say their earthly work was finished and over, true to say our association with them was broken off sharply and sadly by the sword-cut of their death. But it is *not* true of them in their capacity of saints of God. Their work, even in this world, is not over. They are "equal to the angels." They are, we cannot doubt it, "in presence of" those angels of God who joy over our repentance, and so sorrow for and strive against our sin—the very guardian angels of the homes they loved, as even Dives in the unseen world thought anxiously of the neglected home he had left behind, and asked that Lazarus might be sent on an angel-mission to that father's house and those five brethren.

Christ's care even for the earthly home was not over when the sudden death of Calvary cut off in a moment His *bodily presence*; witness the frequent apparitions during the

shadowed forty days. His association with His own was not—is not—over. It stands assured in that clause of the Apostles' Creed, which says, "I believe in the Communion of Saints." It is, as we have said, that directly the words of the text take up their old original import when sent forth from the Cross on Calvary, they lose their old sad accents as applied to our lost beloved ones, and take up their glorious meanings in reference to God's redeemed. The life work is *not* over, nay, has but begun in real earnest. The association with us is *not* over. It is, to the eye of faith, closer, deeper, truer than ever in the mystical body of Christ, the Communion of Saints expectant in Paradise, and saints still militant here in earth. It is only when the shadow of His Cross strikes athwart the saint's pathway of light that it *is* true, of them as of Him, that worldly probation, trial and suffering, are over, that the great atonement has been made, that the saint and the Saviour are *at one!*

And such is the glorious truth, which now, in the early winter of this world, stands prominently out to call off our thoughts to Jerusalem the Golden. Will you wonder that, in speaking about it, our words take something of a speculative visionary shape, if you will have it so, rather than the hard, cold, precise tone of dogmatic theology? I am speaking to-day not so much of the veteran cohort, whose hero-names stand blazoned in the calendar, as I am speaking of the rank and file of God's army, those who stood side by side with us in our humble places here, and then, one by one fell out and left vacant spots for us to fill as best we might :

"The holy ones and weakly
Who the cross of suffering bore ;
Folded their pale hands so meekly
Spake with us on earth no more."

Will you deem it a "rhapsody of words," if our religion to-day, of all days in the year, embodies itself in very homely expressions, and in ideas which those whose hearts God has not yet touched with sorrow for the lost might deem secular instead of sacred?

It is the grand transforming power of Christ's gospel to turn the secular into the sacred, to blot the words "common and unclean" out of the saint's vocabulary. Those homes and families which before were only consecrated by domestic affection, became more sacred still when the sign of His Cross was stamped upon them; and in their largest significance they have but expanded into the Church and the Communion of Saints. It is so that the sacramental energy of Christ's Atonement touches all our worldly relations, and touches to ennoble them—albeit with His coronet of thorns.

And so it is that those whom we sadly named our "departed," and tearfully talked of as the parents, or the little children, or the dear friends we had "lost," show themselves in the light of Christ's revelation as *not* departed, only gone up higher: only gone to sleep in Jesus; as *not* lost, but gone before, still working on us and with us, still united to us in the unbroken association of that "one communion and fellowship" which no death can ever touch.

Remember that it *is* an association of saints, that there is no communion of sinners, and what a sanction for holy life does this clause in our creed become! Every unholy act or habit, every unsaintly thought or word, takes us a step farther from those who have gone before us—not only the Saviour and the Bible saints (if we can frame our lips to say that word "only"), but the dear familiar saints of our old homes, of whom in reference to by-past life and experience

the words of the text have come, in their reflex upon ourselves, to be true, "It is finished." Finished—let us gather up once more the fragments of to-day's thoughts—finished indeed the poor weak fragile span we called "life" here, but only for the truer, grander life to begin there in the deathless place. Finished the brief association here, and oh, *how* brief it seems as we look back on it to-day! but only to deepen into everlasting re-union there, when the "little while" is over, and again we see them all—Saviour and saints. Finished, thank God, their earthly trial and probation. The week of work is over; the sabbath of rest and peace has dawned. The beautiful Resurrection morn has broken upon the night of weeping. Finished the great atonement, the last living line of likeness which was wanting to conform them utterly into their Lord's image, they have passed hand in hand with Him from Calvary to Paradise, from the noise and turmoil of this world, passed

"To where, beyond these voices, there is peace."

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